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**Bonnie Cashin: Connecting the designer to the designed garment through
a material culture analysis of five examples of her work, 1962-1975**

by

Martha Jane Bute

A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
MASTER OF SCIENCE

Major: Textiles and Clothing

Program of Study Committee:
Susan J. Torntore, Major Professor
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Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa
2007

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Abstract

This thesis examined a group of five Bonnie Cashin-designed showroom and runway garments and other design- and marketing-related materials (sketches, patterns, and press essays) in the Textiles and Clothing Museum (TCM) at Iowa State University. Her manufacturer, Philip Sills, donated these materials. Cashin was an American ready-to-wear fashion designer well-known for her use of leather, suede, textured fabrics, and hardware-style closures. The recognizable “Cashin look” was layered using ponchos, capes, coats, and other garments such as jumpsuits that all incorporated leather or suede as trim or major design and structural elements.

The materials analyzed in this study are typical of Cashin’s work with Sills and date from 1962 to 1975. Research goals were to: 1) connect these garments to Cashin’s design process and philosophy; 2) understand the Sills manufacturing process; 3) understand Cashin’s role in marketing such pieces; and 4) determine if these artifacts were produced commercially. The overarching purpose was to document and interpret the TCM collection of Cashin artifacts. Research methods included a material culture analysis of the artifacts guided by Prown’s sequential three-step model of description, deduction, and speculation. History research methods were used to investigate Cashin’s work, design process and philosophy, and the manufacturing and marketing of her designs. Primary sources on design and marketing of the garments were sought in major Cashin archives and through a search of contemporaneous press and industry sources. The artifacts were documented and interpreted using these source materials. The five TCM artifacts, in connection with their related materials and the materials found in additional archival sources, are a rich source of data to address the study’s goals. Cashin’s philosophy was consistently part of her clothing designs and was the basis for her rhetoric about them. This consistency created and strengthened her brand.

This research is significant because it provides extensive documentation for the TCM, builds a strong descriptive connection between artifacts and designer, and explores Cashin’s design process and the marketing of her work. The descriptive and interpretive connections made between these artifacts and Cashin’s work and branding is new to the body of research about Bonnie Cashin.

Preface

In the spring semester of 2005, I began my assistantship with Dr. Susan Torntore working in the collection of cultural and historic textiles and clothing, now named the Textiles and Clothing Museum (TCM), at Iowa State University. I was the only graduate assistant working in the collection that semester and Dr. Torntore was preparing for a new class, History of Twentieth Century Fashion. We needed to find examples of fashionable and designer clothing that spanned the 1900s. Our search began by reading the notes on boxes in the TCM collection that indicated what time period of clothing the box contained and then went to the hand written inventory to determine if that box might be worth exploring. The inventory usually mentioned a designer label if there was one, but the short descriptions were not enough to make decisions for use so we opened and picked through many boxes. Early in our search we discovered two boxes with the name “Cashin” written on the sides. We pulled them before looking at the inventory and found fourteen garments and ensembles that were instantly recognizable as her work. As a result of recent graduate assistant and professor turnover and because of the large quantity of difficult-to-search artifacts, these gems had been “forgotten.” When deciding on a topic for my thesis, I turned to the collection and the fascinating Bonnie Cashin garments. Part way through the research for this thesis Dr. Torntore and I presented a paper¹ at the Costume Society of America’s Annual Conference in 2006. At this conference we discussed the significance of our “discovery” as a process of object research not only as documentation and interpretation of a collection but also how it could lead to expanding use of such a collection and its documentation in the classroom.

1. Bute and Torntore, "Found in the Collection: New Perspectives on the Work of Bonnie Cashin." (oral paper).

Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis focuses on five artifacts designed by Bonnie Cashin and produced as models by Sills and Co. These five artifacts are part of a sub-collection of Bonnie Cashin pieces in the Textiles and Clothing Museum (TCM) collection at Iowa State University (ISU), the majority of which were donated in 1981 by her primary manufacturer, Philip Sills. This sub-collection includes garments such as coats, dresses, skirt and pant outfits in leather, suede, tweed, jersey, mohair, and other fabrics. The garments donated by Sills were showroom and runway models.² Philip Sills also donated pattern blocks, designer sketches, publicity and runway photos, a fabric swatch book, and several designer- and manufacturer-written collection essays³ that coordinate with these garments. Variety and interconnectedness of artifacts, such as these, aid researchers in revealing a more comprehensive story of the past than single artifacts because the related artifacts describe and help document each other. In the TCM, few other donations include information about the garments donated other than dates of wear and donor. When additional information was made available, it is almost always about the person who owned the garments and perhaps about the event or function where a garment was worn.

Designer pieces are also a rarity in the TCM. Some have been donated by the women who owned and enjoyed them, and are mostly ready-to-wear purchased from department stores. An exception is one donation similar to the Sills donation that came from Arnold Scaasi, an American designer, who donated several runway garments. Unlike the Sills donation, however, the Scaasi pieces do not include artifacts other than the garments. The Cashin garments from Sills were not production pieces, and they were donated with their publicity and design material; therefore, they present a unique opportunity to investigate the marketing process, the design process, and the collaboration between a designer and manufacturer.

The goals of my research were to connect the garments in the TCM to Cashin's work, her design process, and her design philosophy; to understand more about Sills and Co.'s manufacturing process; to understand more about Cashin's role in marketing; and

2. Model garments are like prototypes; they were sewn to test the pattern and to be shown to buyers as examples of the garments available that season.

3. All references to "collection essays" in this thesis refer to the writing of Bonnie Cashin and Philip Sills about each season's collection of clothing. Any mention of writing about a museum collection is referred to more specifically.

to determine whether or not the model garments of the TCM identically represented work that was produced and retailed. Ultimately, the purpose was also to document and interpret the TCM Cashin artifacts.

This research is significant in that it creates documentation for the TCM, analyzes the artifacts to understand the designer, and explores the marketing of her work. Previously, there were only minimal records regarding the mechanics of the donation and simple accession descriptions of the Cashin artifacts in the TCM files. Analyzing artifacts to understand the past or a particular fashion designer is not new, but little of this type of research, incorporating a wider range of related materials with the clothing artifacts, has focused on Bonnie Cashin. Currently, there is no available discussion about the marketing of Cashin's clothing other than brief hints about how she worked.

Chapter Two is the review of literature pertaining to Cashin's life and career. Many texts cataloguing fashion designers include information about Cashin. Information documenting the designer's career was found in newspaper articles published during her life. She spoke openly about her design philosophy, inspiration, and current work and gave frequent interviews. She was outspoken on these topics as well as her opinions on the state of the fashion industry and design education. This makes accessing her values and objectives easier—simply reading news articles and published interviews reveals her attitudes. There have also been several exhibitions of her work that contribute to an understanding of the broad scope of her design work and influences. Overall, however, there is no extensive or comprehensive biography of her life or career, and little information about her working relationship with Philip Sills. At the beginning of Chapter Two I compiled a brief biography in order to provide the reader the necessary background for information referred to in the literature review and later chapters.

Chapter Three opens with the history of the Sills donation of Cashin artifacts to the TCM collection. This brief history addresses the purpose of this study by advancing the documentation of the artifacts. Information about the garments as artifacts is part of their provenience and therefore an important part of their documentation. Next, I explain the selection process for the five garments and ensembles⁴ on which this study is focused.

4. I refer to the clothing as garments and ensembles because some items are single garments, like the cape and Half and Half coatdress and others are ensembles of two garments, like the poncho and pants and suit.

These five garments and ensembles are: the “Tin Lizzie” coat, “Half and Half” coatdress, tweed poncho and pants, tweed suit, and “Big Flamenco” cape. Last, I describe the methods of research. Prown’s model of object study⁵ guided the analysis of the garments and helped determine a program of research. I described the process of using Prown’s model to analyze the five artifacts I chose from the TCM. I then visited several archives that held information about Cashin’s work and history. I used history research methods to analyze the sources I found.

In Chapter Four I present my findings based on Prown’s model and outline the analysis of the garments within the three areas of description, documentation, and speculation. This chapter includes exhaustive descriptions of the garments, my perceptions of the garments, and interpretation of them based on historical research. This process of object analysis resulted in an extensive and more accurate database of artifact identification and documentation for the TCM, and highlighted several interesting areas for further investigation.

Chapter Five introduces the themes developed from my analysis that were used to interpret my findings and address the goals of this study. These themes are: 1) details of the artifacts which are characteristic of Cashin’s work for Sills and Co., 2) Cashin’s design philosophy as reflected in the artifacts I studied, and 3) the marketing of Cashin’s garments. By looking thematically at the details of the five garments, Cashin’s philosophy, and Cashin’s role in marketing, I was able to generalize and contextualize the findings of my study. I documented numerous details about how the TCM garments relate to Cashin’s design philosophy. Regarding Sills and Co.’s manufacturing process I found references to the sourcing of materials in the collection essays and observed that paper tags on the garments probably related to manufacturing information, but this information was too sparse to put together cohesively, so I make suggestions for further research in this area. I was not able to connect Cashin’s work in the TCM collection specifically with garments produced and marketed in the retail sector. However, I was able to determine relationships between the garments and Cashin’s marketing role and her marketing methods by making specific connections between several types of sources: the garments, Cashin’s notes on sketches of the garments, information contained in the

5. Prown, "Mind in Matter."

collection essays related to these and other garments, notations on the garment patterns, magazine or newspaper ads, and other primary sources found in archives.

Chapter Six is a summary of this research. I present the significance of this knowledge and how it broadens the understanding of Cashin's work. Significantly, this study synthesizes records pertaining to the Sills donation of Cashin artifacts and connects those artifacts to Cashin's history. Research within the TCM is sparse; developing documentation about the holdings of the TCM will make the collection more accessible to teaching and further research. The descriptive connection between these artifacts and Cashin's design philosophy and the marketing of her brand is new to the body of research about Bonnie Cashin. Museum exhibitions have connected Cashin's artifacts to her life and work, but this study is more comprehensive, deeper, and provides a descriptive connection between the artifacts and who Bonnie Cashin was and what she did. Analyzing how Cashin's designs were marketed and her involvement in that marketing is also new to the body of research about Bonnie Cashin. Additionally, this research was used in the development of a collaborative, traveling exhibition about Bonnie Cashin, titled "Cashin + 6: Crafting an American Style: 1946-1975," that was on display at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln in spring 2007 and will be displayed in the TCM at Iowa State University (ISU) in fall 2007.⁶ Finally, I present ideas to advance the study of the holdings of the TCM and to extend inquiry of Cashin's career, her clothing artifacts, and the manufacturing process at Sills and Co. to provide paths for future research.

6. The co-curators of "Cashin + 6" are Dr. Barb Trout, Dr. Susan Torntore, and Dr. Jean Parsons, assistant curators are Martha Jane Bute and Stacie Skold, with curatorial support from Tina Koeppel. This exhibition was on display in the Robert Hillestad Textiles Gallery at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln from March 12 to April 13, 2007 and displayed in The Mary Alice Gallery of the TCM at ISU from September 16 to November 18, 2007.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter, I review literature pertinent to my study of Bonnie Cashin's clothing. The literature review is divided into three sections: 1) biographical information and design philosophy, 2) museum holdings and exhibitions, and 3) contemporaneous sources about Cashin. Although Bonnie Cashin was well known during her life and was frequently interviewed, writings about her life and career have been sparse and are mostly found in secondary source compilations such as fashion and/or designer dictionaries and encyclopedias. An exception to this is the work of Stephanie Day Iverson, who has done extensive biographical work.⁷ Because Cashin lived her philosophy, wore her own clothing, and chose her career path based on how she wanted to do her work, her life and philosophy were intertwined. The literature about her mixes her history with her practice so I combined those topics in this review.

Museum holdings are another source of information about Cashin's designs. Many examples of Cashin's clothing designs as well as sketches, essays, and tear sheets⁸ are part of many museum collections around the country. Several exhibition catalogues portray her work and compare and contrast it to that of contemporary designers.

Contemporaneous popular and industry sources and several obituaries represent a final group of primary source information. These sources demonstrate the perception of Cashin and her clothing during her lifetime. Many contemporaneous sources were found at archives. This is indicated in the citation for these particular sources in the bibliography. To facilitate further research, Appendix A is a list of sources found in archives sorted by archive and type. This is far from a complete list of sources from those archives; rather it provides readers a picture of the types of sources used in this study. Appendix A includes cited sources and sources that were not cited.

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7. Stephanie Day Iverson is the primary biographer of Bonnie Cashin. Iverson met and was befriended by Cashin in 1997 and wrote about Cashin for her master's thesis at Bard College. See Wilson and Ozzard, "Designer Bonnie Cashin Dead at 84." In 2004, Cashin's own work-related collection was given to the Charles E. Young Research Library at University of California, Los Angeles, and is named the Bonnie Cashin Collection of Fashion, Theater, and Film Costume Design. Iverson catalogued that collection. See Wilson, "Bonnie's Belle;" and Stephanie Lake, e-mail message to author, July 5, 2007. Iverson, now Stephanie Lake, is the creative director of the Bonnie Cashin Foundation and is working on a biography of the designer. See Lake, "Main Page." Since she used her former name for the articles I referenced, I will refer to her mostly as Stephanie Day Iverson.
 8. Tear sheets are pages torn from magazines, in this case advertisements or photo spreads featuring Cashin's clothing designs.

Before beginning the review of literature a cursory biography and an understanding of Cashin's design philosophy is required as a foundation. The brief biography of her life helps explain the designer's background and motivations, which are essential to understanding her design work. Cashin's biography and an overview of her design philosophy lay the foundation for the analysis of the sources reviewed in this chapter.

Brief Biography of Bonnie Cashin

Bonnie Cashin was born in Fresno, California in 1908.⁹ Her mother, Eunice, was a professional dressmaker and her father, Carl, was an inventor.¹⁰ From an early age, Cashin played with fabric remnants and designed dresses her mother sewed for her. Cashin claimed her mother could do anything with her hands and referred to her sewing education as an "apprenticeship" with her mother.¹¹ Cashin attended Hollywood High School, and in 1925, a year before graduating, Cashin became a costume designer for the Fanchon and Marco dance troupe in Los Angeles.¹² In 1933, she moved to New York City with the producers of the L.A. troupe to design for the Roxyettes, chorus line dancers of the Roxy Theater.¹³ For both Fanchon and Marco and the Roxy Theater, Cashin designed dance costumes on a tight budget. She used inexpensive materials creatively, carefully considered color combinations that would look attractive on stage, and sewed costumes that moved with the body and looked attractive in motion.¹⁴ Her mother frequently helped her meet costume deadlines at Fanchon and Marco and the Roxy Theater.

Her designs for the Roxy Theater dancers were seen by Carmel Snow, of *Harper's Bazaar*, who encouraged and aided her in finding a job with Adler and Adler, a prestigious New York coat and suit manufacturer.¹⁵ She worked under contract for Adler and Adler from 1938 to 1943.¹⁶ In 1941, at the invitation of New York City's Mayor

9. Lake, "Timeline."

10. Iverson, "'Early' Bonnie Cashin: Before Bonnie Cashin Designs, Inc.;" and Rosner and Abt, *The Creative Experience*.

11. Iverson, "'Early' Bonnie Cashin: Before Bonnie Cashin Designs, Inc.;" and Rosner and Abt, *The Creative Experience*.

12. Lake, "Timeline;" and Iverson, "'Early' Bonnie Cashin."

13. Lake, "Timeline."

14. Iverson, "'Early' Bonnie Cashin."

15. Iverson, "Bonnie Cashin;" and Iverson, "'Early' Bonnie Cashin."

16. Lake, "Timeline."

LaGuardia, she designed Civilian Defense uniforms along with Claire McCardell and Vera Maxwell.¹⁷ For these early ready-to-wear designs and the Civilian Defense uniforms, Cashin had to work within the clothing restrictions imposed by the government during World War II. Cashin saw this as a challenge that improved her product but also felt the constraint on her creativity.

In 1943, Cashin signed a six-year contract with Twentieth Century-Fox to design film costumes.¹⁸ She was weary of wartime clothing restrictions and what she saw as the design restrictions imposed by the business culture of Seventh Avenue.¹⁹ These restrictions and the ending of her brief marriage to director Robert Sterner²⁰ seem to be part of what prompted her move back to California. At Fox studios Cashin wore only her own clothing designs, sometimes influenced by what she designed for films. This led to offscreen clothing requests from the leading ladies she dressed on-screen, that her mother helped her sew.²¹ The ethnic influence in her designs became more apparent as she incorporated the diversity she saw as a girl in California and took cues from her movie costume designs, such as the Siamese wraps in *Anna and the King*.²²

In 1950, Cashin moved back to New York City and resumed work with Adler and Adler and won both the Neiman Marcus Award and the Coty Fashion Critic's Award within the year.²³ She is often quoted as having referred to Hollywood as a "safe berth" since for movie costumes there were no constraints related to mass production that required her to hone her designs.²⁴

Enthusiastic about design but desiring greater creative freedom Cashin established Bonnie Cashin Designs, Inc. and began her freelance work in 1951.²⁵ She worked out of her apartment in Manhattan located across from the Museum of Modern Art.²⁶ Cashin designed her first collection for Philip Sills in 1953 and continued designing collections

17. Ibid.

18. Iverson, "Bonnie Cashin."

19. Iverson, "'Early' Bonnie Cashin;" and Lake, "Timeline."

20. Blausen and Minderovic, "Bonnie Cashin." Cashin never remarried and had no children. I did not find the inclusive dates of her marriage to Sterner.

21. Iverson, "'Early' Bonnie Cashin;" and Lake, "Timeline."

22. Iverson, "'Early' Bonnie Cashin."

23. Iverson, "Bonnie Cashin;" and Lake, "Timeline."

24. Iverson, "'Early' Bonnie Cashin."

25. Ibid.; and Lake, "Timeline."

26. Iverson, "'Early' Bonnie Cashin."

with him until his retirement in 1977.²⁷ The 1953 collection was sewn almost entirely in leather and was a big success. *Women's Wear Daily* referred to it as a futuristic collection the models of which looked like “ladies from Mars.”²⁸ Her collections soon included fabrics in combination with leather (like the TCM Half and Half coatdress, Figure 4-13) or with merely a leather piping (like the TCM tweed poncho and pants, Figure 4-24). She soon became known by her Sills designs that included colorful leather and suede, chunky tweeds, and other deeply textured fabrics. Cashin was often told that her ideas were impossible to produce. Her mother, Eunice, helped her overcome this hurdle by instructing the garment workers of Seventh Avenue on how to construct her daughter's designs.²⁹

From 1951 until her retirement in 1985, she also designed for many other manufacturers and retailers that represented a wide range of apparel and accessories.³⁰ She designed rain coats for Main Street Rainwear; bags, purses, and wallets for Coach Leatherwear; gloves for Crescendoe-Superb; and knitwear for Ballantyne; her designs were sold at Bergdorf Goodman, Henri Bendel, Hermes, Liberty of London, Neiman Marcus, Lord & Taylor, and Macy's.³¹ Different from common practice, Cashin did not license her name and was the sole designer at her company.³² Anything bearing her label was created by her, and not merely with her consent or by her protocols.³³ Cashin was widely popular and sought after by many manufacturers. In 1960, when the owners of Coach Leatherwear wanted to start a line of handbags, they asked Cashin to be their designer. She refused on the grounds that she was too busy so the owners waited two years for her workload to lighten before expanding their product line to include “Cashin Carry” handbags in 1962.³⁴

In 1955, Cashin purchased a house she called “Tantamount,” in Briarcliff, New York that served as her home and studio for about eleven years.³⁵ It is unclear if she held

27. Iverson, *Bonnie Cashin: Practical Dreamer*, 20.

28. *Ibid.*, 11.

29. *Ibid.*, 11.

30. Lake, “Timeline.”

31. *Ibid.*

32. Iverson, “My Passion for Cashin: A Young Student Who Forged a Bond with the Designer Bonnie Cashin Remembers Her Mentor;” and Iverson, “‘Early’ Bonnie Cashin.”

33. Iverson, “‘Early’ Bonnie Cashin.”

34. *Ibid.*; and Lake, “Timeline.”

35. Lake, “Timeline;” and Rosner and Abt, *The Creative Experience*.

onto the Manhattan apartment across for the Museum of Modern Art while living and working in Briarcliff; she did make frequent trips to New York City, about an hour from Briarcliff.³⁶ Tantamount was an old carriage house with outdoor living space that connected it to nature, a great inspiration for Cashin's country focused apparel. In 1966 she purchased her final two apartments in the United Nations Plaza in Manhattan; she made her home in one and worked in both.³⁷ Here she enjoyed the view of the sky, the East River, the bustling city, and especially the "constant panorama of ethnic groups...near the United Nations."³⁸ All of this, she felt, inspired her work.

In 1970, Cashin opened The Knittery, which sold sweaters hand knitted by women first in Britain and later in upstate New York.³⁹ Cashin established the Innovative Design Fund in 1980, a non-profit organization that provided money to build the prototypes for new designers.⁴⁰ Her concern that Seventh Avenue did not provide the right environment for good apparel design is well documented. She felt most clothing designers were not producing the functional clothing real people needed, but instead were continually rehashing the past.⁴¹ She also viewed design education as inadequate and stated, "[e]mphasis is so strong on commercial values and so little on the creative attitude that, in my opinion, our industry is in for a bad time."⁴² Starting the Innovative Design Fund was a way for Cashin to inspire and discover original functional designs of any household goods that had mass production potential and facilitate getting those designs to market.⁴³

Cashin won many awards for her designs; Iverson lists thirty awards received by Cashin from within the American fashion industry and from universities. Celebrating the functional and sporting aspects of her clothing, she won the Sporting Look Award from *Sports Illustrated* in 1958 and the Sports Illustrated Award in 1963. For her handbags, she won the Leather Industries American Handbag Designer Award in 1968 and 1976. She also won the Neiman Marcus Award in 1950, Lord and Taylor's Salute for Creative

36. Rosner and Abt, *The Creative Experience*.

37. Iverson, "Chic is Where You Find It;" and Rosner and Abt, *The Creative Experience*.

38. Rosner and Abt, *The Creative Experience*, 243.

39. Iverson, "'Early' Bonnie Cashin;" and Lake, "Timeline."

40. Iovine, "Financing the Quest for a Better Mug;" and Lake, "Timeline."

41. Iverson, "'Early' Bonnie Cashin."

42. Rosner and Abt, *The Creative Experience*, 248.

43. Iovine, "Financing the Quest for a Better Mug."

Contribution to American Design in 1960, the Saks Fifth Avenue Creator Citation in 1969, I. Magnin's Great American Award in 1974, and the American Fashion Award for Furs in 1975. In 1972, Cashin was inducted into the prestigious Coty Hall of Fame after receiving three awards from them: the Coty Fashion Critics Award in 1950, the Coty American Fashion Critics Award in 1960, and the Coty American Fashion Critics Special Award in 1961. In 2001, she was posthumously inducted into the Fashion Walk of Fame in the fashion district of Manhattan.⁴⁴

Cashin traveled extensively for pleasure, work, and inspiration. Her first trip overseas was to Europe for two months in 1948.⁴⁵ When she returned she condemned Paris fashion designers for not designing for modern women.⁴⁶ In 1957, she went to India to work on a Ford Foundation project for the Indian government to help in the development of the hand-woven textile export market.⁴⁷ Also outside of Europe she traveled to China, Japan, Thailand, and Russia.⁴⁸ She spent a great deal of time in Britain, sourcing and specifying fabrics for her Sills and Co. designs, working with Ballantyne knitwear, and overseeing production of hand-knits for The Knittery.⁴⁹ When traveling, Cashin observed, purchased, and was strongly inspired by ethnic and traditional clothing and incorporated what she saw in her ready-to-wear designs.⁵⁰ Interestingly, she never attended runway shows other than her own; she preferred to see clothing in the action of real life.⁵¹ Cashin retired from fashion design in 1985 and focused on painting and philanthropy. She passed away on February 3, 2000.⁵²

An Introduction to Bonnie Cashin's Design Philosophy

The purpose of this section is to familiarize the reader with Bonnie Cashin and provide a foundation for the following literature review. Her philosophy is discussed in more depth in Chapter Five.

44. Lake, "Honors."

45. Iverson, *Bonnie Cashin: Practical Dreamer*.

46. Ibid.

47. Iverson, "Chic is Where You Find It," and Rosner and Abt, *The Creative Experience*.

48. Iverson, *Bonnie Cashin: Practical Dreamer*; and Rosner and Abt, *The Creative Experience*.

49. Cashin and Sills, "Fall-Winter 1964-65 Press showing May 14—Opening May 18" (collection essay); and Iverson, "Chic is Where You Find It."

50. Iverson, *Bonnie Cashin: Practical Dreamer*.

51. *American Fabrics and Fashions*, "Roundtable;" and Rosner and Abt, *The Creative Experience*.

52. Lake, "Timeline."

Bonnie Cashin designed clothing that suited a modern woman's lifestyle, particularly one like her own, a working woman who spent time in the city and the country. She believed fashion should follow function and designed for the environment of modern life. Examples of this were her incorporation of large pockets and/or attached purses, handy for many occasions, and the simple construction of her garments that allowed them to be folded flat for traveling or stowing in a small apartment. She is credited with introducing layered dressing to Western fashion, a concept she adopted after a trip to China where people wore more pieces and layers of clothing, not bigger heavier pieces, when the weather was cold. The quick speed of the obsolescence of fashion bothered her so she kept her collections classic, not based on trends, and maintained her distinctive "Cashin look," changing colors and fabrics and evolving garment forms for new collections.

Biographical Information and Design Philosophy

Stephanie Day Iverson has done extensive biographical research on Bonnie Cashin. In "'Early' Bonnie Cashin, Before Bonnie Cashin Designs, Inc.,"⁵³ Iverson used her own interviews with Cashin, Cashin's personal archive, and other archives of Cashin's work and writings to tell the story of Cashin's life from childhood until she began working as a freelance designer. Iverson also wrote the brochure that accompanied "Bonnie Cashin: Practical Dreamer,"⁵⁴ an exhibition at the Fashion Institute of Technology in 2000, which Iverson co-curated with Dorothy Twining Globus. In this brochure, Iverson's main argument was to show the extent of Cashin's career beyond her work for Sills. In the last paragraph of the brochure Iverson wrote, "Bonnie supervised the planning for this exhibition, with the understanding that it would go beyond showing just her signature 'tweedy-weedy' and leather clothes."⁵⁵ The brochure provides dates but does not compare Cashin to contemporaneous designers. It is mostly a biographic outline with some information about Cashin's motives for her career moves. For example, about Cashin's move from Hollywood back to New York in 1949, Iverson wrote, "Anxious to equip the curious nomad, like herself, and disliking the safe berth that Hollywood had

53. Iverson, "'Early' Bonnie Cashin."

54. Iverson, *Bonnie Cashin: Practical Dreamer*.

55. *Ibid.*, 21.

become, Bonnie decided to return to Seventh Avenue.”⁵⁶ In 2001, Iverson wrote “My Passion for Cashin” for *The New York Times Magazine*⁵⁷ about Cashin, describing how they met, the designer’s character, and her popularity. Cashin’s personal archive was donated to the Charles E. Young Research Library at University of California, Los Angeles (Young Research Library) in 2004, and is called the Bonnie Cashin Collection of Fashion, Theater, and Film Costume Design.⁵⁸ Iverson catalogued this archive and used it to curate the Young Research Library’s online exhibition, “Chic is Where You Find It,”⁵⁹ illustrating Cashin’s life using the archive’s images and information. With access to Cashin’s personal archive, Iverson discovered the designer’s correct birth year was 1908. Previously, 1915 was always used as the year she was born; the date given in all texts I have located, other than Iverson’s, is 1915.⁶⁰

In 2005, Iverson wrote an article about the designer for the *Encyclopedia of Clothing and Fashion*,⁶¹ in which she portrays Cashin as an artist and sculptor as opposed to a designer because of her use of geometric pattern shapes rather than seam shaping. For example Iverson wrote,

Cashin favored timeless shapes from the history of clothing, such as ponchos, tunics, Noh coats, and kimonos, which allowed for ease of movement and manufacture. Approaching dress as a form of collage or kinetic art, she favored luxurious, organic materials that she could ‘sculpt’ into shape, such as leather, suede, mohair, wool jersey, and cashmere, as well as nonfashion materials, including upholstery fabrics. Cashin’s aim was to create ‘simple art forms for living in, to be re-arranged as mood and activity dictates.’⁶²

Iverson is currently the Creative Director of the Bonnie Cashin Foundation and has curated two online exhibitions for that web site: “The La-La Girls,” exhibiting the

56. Ibid., 8.

57. Iverson, “My Passion for Cashin.”

58. *Library Journal*, “UCLA Library.”

59. Iverson, “Chic Is Where You Find It.”

60. I learned, from Victoria Steele, the director of the Young Research Library, that Cashin began lying about her age probably at the time she designed in Hollywood, making herself younger by seven years. Victoria Steele, telephone conversation with the author, March 6, 2007.

61. Iverson, “Bonnie Cashin.”

62. Ibid., 232.

childhood art of Cashin and “The Editorial Eye: Clippings from the Cashin Archive.”⁶³ Iverson is now working on a biography of Cashin entitled *Chic is Where you Find It*.⁶⁴

Iverson’s work provides biographical background that is otherwise missing from literature about the designer. Iverson astutely outlines Cashin’s philosophy and inspirations in a biographical perspective. Although I have listed many titles here, Iverson’s contribution to the scholarship, though more than other authors, is fairly lean. Most of her work is in the format of exhibitions that give terse information about the designer with no citations. Her writing is mostly descriptive and about Cashin’s career; she does not place Cashin into the context of contemporary fashion design and rarely links Cashin to American culture or history. Errors in dates are present in Iverson’s work and crosschecking with the Bonnie Cashin Foundation website, the most recent work, is necessary for accuracy.

Cashin’s clothing designs were well known during her life; as evidenced by her awards, and her inclusion in many texts cataloguing the work and lives of fashion designers. The following sources briefly review her life and career and have various inaccuracies in dates and activities but generally not in the timeline of events of Cashin’s life. Because the error of birth year is pervasive, I have ignored it in all but the latest publication. The review of sources is in order of publication dates, which span 1965 to 2005.

This category of literature about Cashin’s biographical information and design philosophy includes primarily selections from encyclopedias and industry and academic textbook compilations of fashion notables. The writing largely resembles contemporaneous fashion journalism about Cashin. Like the fashion journalism, these sources tout her as a unique fashion designer who was ahead of her time, highly creative, and outspoken regarding what she did not like about the fashion industry such as a lack of creativity from designers and the planned obsolescence created by the industry.

Levin’s *The Wheels of Fashion*⁶⁵ is not an alphabetical listing of designers as found with other texts listed here, but she describes the designs of a number of designers and vaguely compares them to each other. The page about Cashin provides a sentence

63. Lake, "Archived Exhibitions."

64. Lake, "Main Page."

65. Levin, *The Wheels of Fashion*.

about her family, and focuses, primarily, on her freelance business, designing for many manufacturers as a way of breaking down the barriers of Seventh Avenue. About Cashin's designs, Levin indicated they were comfortable and durable, suited to an active life, and employed tweeds, leathers, and jerseys instead of taffetas and brocades. *Current Biography Yearbook*⁶⁶ is an exception to many of the sources listed here for its accuracy and thoroughness of biographical information. Additionally, it is a compilation of famous people rather than famous designers and is strictly descriptive. Other than the year of her birth, the biographical information is similar to that of Iverson's writing.⁶⁷ *Current Biography Yearbook* chronicles Cashin's career from her job as a designer for a Los Angeles dance troop (in 1925) before she left high school until her freelance work (in 1951), and mentions her many awards. The article comments on her characteristic style and links it to her philosophy and the appeal of her clothing not only in the U.S. but in England and France as well.

Watkins' *Who's Who in Fashion*⁶⁸ is an alphabetical catalogue of famous fashion designers with one-page descriptions of their typical designs. Watkins relates the look and inspirations for Cashin's designs and mentions Cashin's variety of work and the manufacturers for whom she designed but neglects to mention that Cashin was a freelance designer. In *World of Fashion*, Lambert's⁶⁹ biography of Cashin and the characterizations of her clothing are briefer and more general than most. This volume is an alphabetical listing of designers with short paragraphs on each. Leese⁷⁰ compiled a book of movie costume designers in which she lists movie titles with very little other information. Her entry about Bonnie Cashin is an exception. She wrote two paragraphs pertaining to the designer's biography and how her movie costumes of the late 1940s were less gaudy and more realistic than others' during that time. Leese's biographical information is brief, and early career information is inaccurate, but dates are correct. Carter, a British historian, authored *The Changing World of Fashion*⁷¹ and *Magic Names of Fashion*.⁷² Each are reviews of many designers in which information about Cashin

66. *Current Biography Yearbook*, "Bonnie Cashin."

67. Iverson, "'Early' Bonnie Cashin;" Iverson, *Bonnie Cashin: Practical Dreamer*; Iverson, "Chic Is Where You Find It;" Iverson, "My Passion for Cashin;" and Iverson, "Bonnie Cashin."

68. Watkins, *Who's Who in Fashion*.

69. Lambert, *World of Fashion: People, Places, Resources*.

70. Leese, *Costume Design in the Movies*.

71. Carter, *The Changing World of Fashion: 1900 to Present*.

72. Carter, *Magic Names of Fashion*.

appears in a chapter about American clothing design. In *The Changing World of Fashion* Carter mentions Cashin's background as evidence of her design inspiration and states her clothes are uniquely American but have also influenced British and French clothing design. In *Magic Names of Fashion*, Carter notes Cashin's designs are similar to Claire McCardell's and lists many awards and honors Cashin received.

McDowell, another British author, wrote *McDowell's Directory of Twentieth Century Fashion*,⁷³ an alphabetical listing of designers. She provides photos of Cashin's work, and states that Cashin was ahead of her time and her designs were highly copied. Some of the text appears to be taken from Carter's two books. In *Couture: The Great Designers*,⁷⁴ Milbank characterizes Cashin as a practical American designer in a chapter titled "The Realists" along with Claire McCardell and Vera Maxwell "for their allegiance to women's lives and demands, and respect for their many needs."⁷⁵ This book includes fewer designers than other texts listed here and provides more information than most; however, Cashin is devoted only one page that describes her clothing by her use of layering, and her typical fabrics and closures. O'Hara's *The Encyclopaedia of Fashion*⁷⁶ is another British publication listing many designers alphabetically. The biographical information is correct in general, but some dates are not. O'Hara claims the 1950s and 60s were Cashin's most creative years, citing the many unique garment forms for which she is known. In *Who's Who in Fashion*,⁷⁷ Stegemeyer mentions Cashin's fashion design and film work, lists her major manufacturers and characterizes her clothing designs in half a page. This *Who's Who in Fashion* includes more biographical information than the one previously listed by Watkins,¹¹ however, much is incorrect or misleading. Cashin's look is well described here, except her Noh coat is referred to as "the kimono coat."⁷⁸ Gold,⁷⁹ Glynn,⁸⁰ Pile,⁸¹ *The Fashion Book*,⁸² and Mendes and de la Haye⁸³ each provide

73. McDowell, *McDowell's Directory of Twentieth Century Fashion*.

74. Milbank, *Couture: The Great Designers*.

75. *Ibid.*, 351.

76. O'Hara, *The Encyclopaedia of Fashion: From 1840 to the 1980s*.

77. Stegemeyer, *Who's Who in Fashion*.

78. *Ibid.*, 34.

79. Gold, *75 Years of Fashion*.

80. Glynn, *In Fashion: Dress in the Twentieth Century*.

81. Pile, *Dictionary of 20th-Century Design*.

82. *The Fashion Book*.

83. Mendes and de la Haye, *20th Century Fashion*.

only a sentence or two that identify Cashin as a sportswear innovator from the 1940s to the 1970s.

Steele⁸⁴ gathered much of her information on the designer from the file on Cashin at the Fashion Institute of Technology as well as from an interview she conducted with Cashin. In *Women of Fashion*, Cashin is mentioned with the well-known 1960s designers Mary Quant, Emmanuelle Khahn, and Betsey Johnson, all of whom concentrated on producing youthful street styles and fashion that clashed with couture. Steele positions Cashin as a liberating designer who designed clothing “that still looks modern today.”⁸⁵ A short paragraph on Cashin’s career can also be found in many of Marquis’ *Who’s Who* lists. The one in *Who’s Who in America*⁸⁶ from 1992 is the same used in most years. It lists her jobs with correct dates and several, though not all, of her awards. Milbank’s⁸⁷ second compilation of designers, *New York Fashion*, is an alphabetical listing of designers, which includes many more designers than her earlier work. She describes Cashin’s use of layering and choice of fabrics and provides accurate information about her earlier career (except that Cashin’s theater designs caught the eye of Carmel Snow, not Louis Adler).⁸⁸ Blausen’s *St. James Fashion Encyclopedia*⁸⁹ article is one of the most accurate and thorough short biographies of Cashin within this type of literature. Blausen states Cashin’s clothes were made for active women from simple patterns with few seams or darts. She also describes Cashin’s goal in becoming a freelance designer was to avoid the constraints of contract work and use many manufacturers to create a complete wardrobe for women. Cashin’s spirit is conveyed in this article in a similar way to that of Iverson’s writing. Errors include information about her education and how she landed a job with Adler and Adler. The listing for Cashin in *Fairchild’s Dictionary of Fashion* by Calasibetta⁹⁰ is almost a direct copy of Fairchild’s previous publication, *Who’s Who in Fashion* by Stegemeyer.⁹¹ It is unfortunate that the phrase “in recent years [she]

84. Steele, *Women of Fashion: Twentieth-Century Designers*.

85. Ibid., 142.

86. *Who’s Who in America*, 47th ed.

87. Milbank, *New York Fashion: The Evolution of American Style*.

88. Carmel Snow was editor of *Harper’s Bazaar* and told fashion producer Louis Adler about Cashin after seeing her stage costumes at the Roxy Theater. See Iverson, “‘Early’ Bonnie Cashin.”

89. Blausen, “Bonnie Cashin.”

90. Calasibetta, *Fairchild’s Dictionary of Fashion*, second ed.

91. Stegemeyer, *Who’s Who in Fashion*.

concentrated on coats and raincoats”⁹² was kept ten years after the previous publication. Other mistakes include: use of incorrect terminology such as “kimono coat” instead of Noh coat, use of incorrect dates like 1967 as the establishment of The Knittery instead of 1972, and incorrect biographical information that claims she freelanced for Adler and Adler when actually she worked under exclusive contract for the company.

*Contemporary Fashion*⁹³ appears to be the update to *St. James Fashion Encyclopedia*. The article on Cashin is similar and authored by Blausen with an update by Minderovic. This article is longer with more specific biographical information; the additions are accurate but the previous errors, including birth year, remain. Another addition found in *Contemporary Fashion* is a list of twenty publications about Cashin spanning the years 1956 to 2000.

Together these texts show an interest in Cashin’s career and her design process—how she translated her influences and philosophy into clothing. All of the authors agree that Cashin’s philosophy centered on meeting the clothing needs of modern women’s active lives and that she designed clean-lined garments for layering that accommodated movement and changes in environment. Unfortunately they also reveal a great deal of missing information about her life. Iverson is by far the definitive source for accurate information about the designer’s life and character; however, even within her work there are some discrepancies. As she continues her research within the archive, she has uncovered correct dates and new information making it necessary to double check facts against her latest work on The Bonnie Cashin Foundation website.

Museum Holdings and Exhibitions

This thesis focuses on a finite collection of Cashin’s clothing within a museum setting. I approached this study of Cashin through an object perspective, analyzing her clothing to learn more about her and then using the analysis to understand the TCM collection. This section introduces other museum holdings and outlines exhibitions that have used Cashin’s work as a format to portray specific aspects of her life and work. This is not a comprehensive list since many catalogues were not available.

92. Ibid., 626.

93. Blausen and Minderovic, "Bonnie Cashin."

Museum holdings of Cashin designs generally reflect her partnership with Philip Sills and Coach. Collections of her designs are held at sixteen museums around the country as well as the Royal Ontario Museum in Canada and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.⁹⁴ In addition to these museums, collections of her work are held at twenty-five colleges and universities in the U.S., including ISU.⁹⁵ Some museums began collections of her work during her lifetime, like the Brooklyn Museum of Art, which began collecting her clothing in 1950.⁹⁶ Some museums and schools, including the TCM, received donations from Sills and Co.⁹⁷ In a 1974 collection essay, Sills opens with an announcement that Cashin's samples from 1953 to 1974 were available for donation to schools. "There [were] more than 2,000 garments, kept intact with all their related sketches and many patterns" many of which were produced while others were experiments which Cashin used "to test and develop new approaches."⁹⁸

The Brooklyn Museum of Art held a retrospective of Cashin's work in 1962 after twelve years of collecting her designs, essays, and other news and information about the designer.⁹⁹ The main arguments of this exhibition were that Cashin's work was timeless, that her early 1950s designs were still fresh and that her work was very American in that she borrowed ideas from many cultures and designed casual clothing.¹⁰⁰ Riley, who helped design the exhibition and wrote about it in *American Fabrics and Fashions*, said that what appeared to be Cashin's influence on the "American look" and the collections of other designers was more accurately described as an "increasing [interest] in a casual outdoor life"¹⁰¹ of which Cashin was always a part.

*Meet Bonnie Cashin: Clothes for the Twentieth Century*¹⁰² is an exhibition guide for a 1984-85 exhibition of Bonnie Cashin clothing from the 1950s to 1970s at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. Fifty of the over seventy pieces shown belong to the

94. Lake, "Museum Collections." For a full list see Appendix B.

95. Ibid.

96. Carter, *The Changing World of Fashion: 1900 to Present*; Robert Riley, "Bonnie Cashin Retrospective." Her 1951 awards from Coty and Neiman Marcus were likely the impetus for starting the Cashin collection at The Brooklyn Museum of Art since she was the first designer to win both in one year.

97. Sills donor file in the Textiles and Clothing Museum at Iowa State University.

98. Cashin and Sills, "Spring Opening Nov. 6, 1974" (collection essay), 0.

99. Carter, *The Changing World of Fashion: 1900 to Present*; and Riley, "Bonnie Cashin Retrospective."

100. Riley, "Bonnie Cashin Retrospective."

101. Riley, "Bonnie Cashin Retrospective," 101.

102. Severa, *Meet Bonnie Cashin: Clothes for the 20th Century*.

State Historical Society of Wisconsin. Others were loaned from Mount Mary College in Milwaukee and the Goldstein Museum at the University of Minnesota. From description and dates, it seems that Sills manufactured nearly all the clothing in this exhibition. Since this is only a checklist of exhibited objects it is difficult to know the objective of the curators or the themes of the exhibit.

*American Ingenuity: Sportswear, 1930s-1970s*¹⁰³ is the exhibition guide for the exhibition of the same title at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The exhibition was curated by Richard Martin and included clothing designs of Cashin's as well as Claire McCardell, Tina Lesser, Vera Maxwell, and others. The purpose of the exhibition was to show the origins of women's casual wear in America as well as how American fashion broke away from Parisian influence during the twentieth century. Martin links Cashin's clothing designs to contemporary fashion, and showed how she influenced fashion by writing, for example, "Robust materials seized from hardy men's outerwear became coin of the realm for Cashin... Gender-shared outerwear is now common place, but it was chiefly Cashin's invention."¹⁰⁴ He also discussed how she sometimes conformed to contemporary fashion with comments like, "Cashin was sympathetic to the body-visibility and body-acuity of the 1970s. Having long been a pioneer, she was as ready to accommodate the body as she was to continue to experiment with the versatility of suede for spring and the uses of practical fasteners."¹⁰⁵

*Bonnie Cashin: Practical Dreamer*¹⁰⁶ is the exhibition guide written by Iverson from the exhibition of the same title at the Fashion Institute of Technology in 2000. Iverson and Globus, then director of the Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology, worked with Cashin, just before her death, to organize this exhibition.¹⁰⁷ There is a wealth of information in this guide including many photos, and presents the designer's inspirations and career path. One is given the impression this exhibition was large; credits thank people who made "her archives, her studio and even the contents of her closets available for the exhibition,"¹⁰⁸ along with individual lenders of Cashin pieces. The Fashion Institute of Technology has collected not only clothing and accessory designs of

103. Martin, *American Ingenuity: Sportswear, 1930s-1970s*.

104. Ibid., 35.

105. Ibid., 38.

106. Iverson, *Bonnie Cashin: Practical Dreamer*.

107. Wilson, "Bonnie Cashin's Inspiration."

108. Iverson, *Bonnie Cashin: Practical Dreamer*, 22.

Cashin's, but also information about the designer from newspapers and magazines throughout the 1960s and 70s. The exhibition catalogue paints a picture of Cashin as an independent, artistic fashion designer and provides insight into Cashin's motives for her career changes. The catalogue does little to link Cashin to the contemporary fashion industry or American culture.

The University of Cincinnati holds a collection of 180 Cashin designs, all of which were displayed March 9, 2001.¹⁰⁹ The purpose of this exhibition was to provide a tribute to Cashin and show the variety and character of her work as well as introduce fashion design students to an important twentieth century designer. My knowledge of this exhibition is from a short news article that does not mention much more about it and gives no hint as to whether or not it was accompanied by any commentary.

The online exhibition, "Chic Is Where You Find It,"¹¹⁰ provides text and a lot of images in themed groups outlining Cashin's career. The text reads like an exhibition guide with bits of history and commentary that provide a sense of the designer's thoughts and background. The images are of her clothing, Cashin, and the many sketches she drew throughout her life. Information from this site has been valuable to my study since the objective of the exhibition is to reveal Cashin's personality and personal history and to show how she developed her design philosophy and where she sought inspiration. About Cashin's non-sartorial inspiration for her clothing designs Iverson wrote, "Rather than look at fashion history, she was apt to cite the 'rhythm of poetry or good reading' from John Gardner, Henry Thoreau, Georges Seferis, Buckminster Fuller or Bertrand Russell as a means to stretch her mind and find inspiration for ready-to-wear designs."¹¹¹

The online exhibitions of the Bonnie Cashin Foundation, "The La La Girls"¹¹² and "The Editorial Eye: Clippings from the Cashin Archive,"¹¹³ highlight portions of the Bonnie Cashin Collection at the Young Research Library. Both are composed of images with scant text. "The La La Girls" shows many of the sketches Cashin drew as a child which Lake claims are "from the childhood portfolio that helped her secure her first 'dream' job"¹¹⁴ as a costume designer in Hollywood. "The Editorial Eye" shows many

109. Reilly, "UC Collection of Works by Dramatic Designer to Receive Rare Showing."

110. Iverson, "Chic is Where You Find It."

111. Ibid.

112. Lake, "Archived Exhibitions."

113. Lake, "Current Exhibition."

114. Lake, "Archived Exhibitions."

tear sheets of Cashin's ready-to-wear designs advertised in *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar*. I have found some of these tear sheets in the original magazines and noticed the dates for some of the tear sheets are incorrect. Lake's intent, beyond providing "a comprehensive visual summary"¹¹⁵ of Cashin's work, is to show that Cashin's work appeared frequently in these two high profile magazines and that this visibility contributed to her popularity. The "Timeline" on this website uses images from the Bonnie Cashin Collection at the Young Research Library to illustrate her life and career. The "Timeline" reveals the most accurate account of her life in terms of dates and places; this is due to the fact that Iverson relied on the information in the archive and not misconstrued writing about her work or Cashin's own occasionally, mis-remembered accounts.

Recently, the exhibition "Cashin + 6: Crafting an American Style: 1946-1975" was on view at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln from March to April 2007 and at the Textiles and Clothing Museum at ISU in September and October 2007.¹¹⁶ This exhibition linked the work of Cashin to Hattie Carnegie, Ceil Chapman, James Galanos, Claire McCardell, Norman Norell, and Pauline Trigère, to show aspects of American fashion design in the 1960s and 1970s. This exhibition highlights not only the ISU and University of Nebraska collections but also Cashin's significant contribution to American ready-to-wear fashion design. Regarding Cashin the aim of this exhibition is to show that she designed for herself and that her modular, layered, and casual clothing influenced what came to be called the American "look."¹¹⁷

Contemporaneous Sources

The large amount of popular source articles that focused on Cashin's clothing designs are evidence of Cashin's popularity, how unique her clothing was at certain times, and how fashion "caught up" to her at other times.

The magazine *American Fabrics and Fashions* and newspapers such as the *New York Times*, the *New York Post*, and *Women's Wear Daily* ran articles about Cashin's upcoming collections, articles that featured her as an artist and informed the public about her design processes and philosophy and included advertisements from manufacturers and retailers. The articles about her and her work are short and descriptive. They often

115. Lake, "Current Exhibition."

116. Trout, Torntore, and Parsons, *Cashin + 6: Crafting an American Style: 1946-1975*.

117. Ibid.

discussed Cashin as a great innovator who was “ahead of her time” and one who, to a great extent, reiterated her own rhetoric to the public.¹¹⁸

Articles about her collections offer specific details about the garment forms, fabrics, and occasionally a little about the colors of the particular collections. In 1976, the *New York Times* printed, “bloused pants...are favored by many fashion designers for fall. Bonnie Cashin, who has been showing them for years, puts an elastic at the end and cuts them so that they can be worn under the knee or lower down the leg.”¹¹⁹ They also include runway photos of the garments. Some offer snippets of her philosophy in general or pertaining to that season. For example the *New York Post* printed, “the Noh [coat] sums up Bonnie’s fashion thinking: In its ‘un-cut-up’ shape with minimum seaming it allows beautiful firm fabrics and double-faced wools to go unlined.”¹²⁰ Most of the information that I found in these sources is about her collections with Sills and Co. and The Knittery; however, a few highlight her glove designs for Crescendoe-Superb.

Articles that emphasize her design process and philosophy include many quotes from her and sometimes print her sketches with notes. In 1968, *Women’s Wear Daily* printed what appears to be her side of an interview. Here, Cashin relates the influence of her mother, her feelings about her work in Hollywood, how she designed in the context of life and the environment, and how she maintained her creativity.¹²¹ In 1974, *W* magazine ran an article that included a sketch of Cashin’s with extensive notes about construction, production, and how to wear the outfit (Figure 2-1).¹²² *American Fabrics and Fashions* printed “Bonnie Cashin Retrospective” about the exhibition by the same title at the Brooklyn Museum of Art.¹²³ The article included many sketches and photos of her clothing and discussed her inspiration and philosophy. Since she was so forthcoming about her design process and philosophy, she imbued publicity about herself with these ideas and ideals and the plethora of this type of coverage indicates the press thought it made good copy. This also allowed her a degree of control over the public perception of her clothing. She clearly went beyond merely writing her collection essays, she also spoke frequently to the press and either created specific sketches or allowed her sketches

118. This can be observed in comparing popular media articles to the Cashin-Sills collection essays.

119. Morris, “A Style of Old is New Again,” 66.

120. Preston, “Bonnie Cashin’s Noh Play.”

121. Froio, “Bonnie Cashin Says, ‘I need my dream periods.’”

122. Froio, “Bonnie Cashin on Fashion.”

123. Riley, “Bonnie Cashin Retrospective.”

to be used by the press and in advertising. Some of these articles also allude to her manufacturing in terms of sources of fabrics.

Although I was unable to locate many original magazine tear sheets of photo spreads or advertising of Cashin's work, I did find newspaper advertisements that show images of her work with descriptions, retail locations, and occasionally prices. I did find five photocopies of magazine tear sheets at the Fashion Institute of Technology from *Vogue* and the *New York Times Magazine*, and several advertisements and photo spreads in *Vogue* from my own search through the magazines. Cashin and Sills produced advertisements as well as the retailers who sold Cashin's clothing. Newspaper advertisements used photos and artist sketches. In addition, I found one advertisement that included one of Cashin's own sketches,¹²⁴ and several that included quotes from her.

Another source of information about her work is the publicity material that was produced in-house—the photos and essays written by Cashin and Philip Sills. The collection essays incorporate the look of a season with her design process and philosophy in a captivating way that contextualized her clothing in a lifestyle. They tell the sources of her fabrics and leathers as well as sharing a little about the acquisition of those materials. Final paragraphs of these essays often addressed buyers and retailers directly about how to merchandise her collections in a tone that reveals in reality they knew they had little control over merchandising decisions.

After her death in 2000, several obituaries honored Cashin and her life's work; these tributes appeared in *Women's Wear Daily*, *The New York Times*, *Harpers Bazaar*, and *The Economist*, to name a few. Many of them presented short biographies and reflected on the impact of her clothing designs on American fashion.

It is apparent from this review that Cashin was well known during her life and is highly regarded for her innovations and contributions to American fashion. Even so, Iverson is the only scholar to have extensively researched Cashin's life and work and put forth a comprehensive understanding of the designer.

124. Froio, "Bonnie Cashin on Fashion."

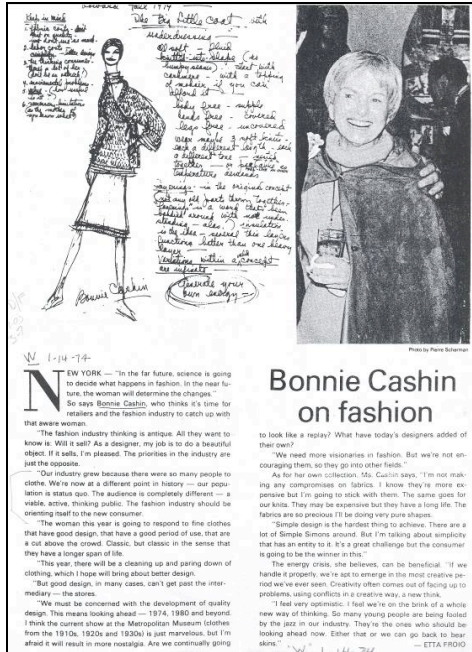


Figure 2-1 Etta Froio, "Bonnie Cashin on Fashion," W, Jan. 14, 1974; Cashin file 3 clipping no. 9, Fashion Institute of Technology.

Chapter 3: Methods

This thesis is an historical study of Bonnie Cashin's work based on artifacts chosen from the Sills donation to the TCM. In this chapter, I introduce the methods used to address the research goals. In order to keep the study grounded in the collection I began with an artifact analysis. This forged the connection between the artifacts and Bonnie Cashin's work as a whole, her design process, and philosophy. It also forged a connection between all of the disparate parts of the donation. I then extended the research into external archives to try to determine how Cashin's designs were marketed and discover whether or not the model garments in the TCM are representative of garments sold to the public.

Before describing my approach in this research, the details of the Sills donation to the TCM at ISU are explained. Next, the criteria for choosing the five garments and ensembles of interest are described. Finally, the model used for artifact analysis, the development of the program of research, and the sources brought together for the study are described.

History of the Helen and Philip Sills Donation to ISU

The Bonnie Cashin sub-collection comprises the Sills donation of thirteen garments and ensembles, a jumpsuit donated by a Des Moines resident, three "Cashin Carry" Coach handbags donated by Dr. Geitel Winakor, a retired ISU textiles and clothing professor, and a Ballantyne knit sweater and skirt donated by Donna Danielson, a former ISU textiles and clothing professor who passed away in December 2006. The garments I researched are exclusively from the Sills donation. The Sills donation to the Cashin sub-collection also includes the designer's sketches, runway and publicity photos, pattern blocks, a fabric swatch book, and essays authored by Cashin and Sills, that relate to the garments, aid in documentation, and broaden our understanding of Cashin's design process as well as her work with Philip Sills. The background of the Sills donation plays an important role in understanding the history of these pieces and shows how closely related they are. What follows is the story of the donation itself as shown by the records in the donation file of the TCM.

In August of 1980, the Costume Society of America (CSA) announced in their newsletter that Philip Sills was donating his collection of Bonnie Cashin items to

museums and schools throughout the United States; he had retired and was closing down and emptying his warehouse. At the time of the newsletter the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Smithsonian, the University of Minnesota, and Rhode Island School of Design had already received donations from him. On October 21, ISU textiles and clothing faculty members, Dr. Geitel Winakor and Mary Welch, sent a letter to Sills stating that they would appreciate a donation and explained the goals and purposes of the historic dress collection at Iowa State.

They received a reply on October 28 detailing the donation procedure: they needed to send a representative to select pieces, pay for an appraisal,¹²⁵ and arrange shipment. Within the faculty there was a connection to Charles Kleibacker, a custom designer in New York, who volunteered to make a selection on their behalf. They contacted Anton Rupert, Jr., an appraiser who was recommended by the Metropolitan Museum of Art to Sills and in turn by Sills to ISU. Dr. Winakor then wrote a request for funds to the Home Economics Development Fund. The appraisal fee was \$200; there are no records of the shipping costs. In July 1981, they received several garments, many had original pattern blocks, several came with their designer sketches, and a few with publicity photos. They also received four collection essays, a swatch book and a poster. The total appraisal was \$7,595.00.

On May 17, 1985, another letter came from Philip Sills stating there were additional Cashin garments he could donate to ISU. Unfortunately, they were now out of reach. Dr. Jane Farrell-Beck, textiles and clothing faculty and collection curator, replied that if payment was again required for a second donation it would not be possible. The final letter in the file is from Sills and Company, dated June 20, 1985 and states that there would be a charge for appraisal and shipping; consequently, no further donations were received from Sills.

Artifact Selection

After examining this donation and the artifacts it included, I chose five representative garments and ensembles on which to focus my analysis. Together these pieces met the criteria of representing the time span of the Sills donation, Cashin's body of work, and the range of supplementary materials in the Sills donation. Additionally,

125. As per current museum ethics, donors are responsible for appraisals, financially and logistically.

since they seemed to be typical Cashin designs, there was increased potential for finding additional source materials about these pieces than if they were atypical of Cashin's work.

The garments and ensembles that comprise the TCM Sills donation range from 1961 to 1975. Other donations to the Cashin sub-collection extend this time period to about 1985. Before beginning work on my thesis I wrote a preliminary research paper for TC 356x/TC 611 History of Twentieth Century Fashion.¹²⁶ I based the criteria for choosing the garments for my thesis on what I learned about Cashin from writing the preliminary paper. The five garments and ensembles I chose are from 1962, 1967, 1971, 1973, and 1975. These five items illustrate the variety of materials Cashin used, including wool jersey, loose woven and chunky tweeds, leather, and suede. They include a range of garment types: a coat, coatdress, poncho, suit, and cape. Additionally, as I learned in research for the preliminary paper, they included typical design elements used by Cashin, such as leather and suede piping, large interior and exterior pockets, bold graphic patterns, and hardware-style fasteners that have become icons of her work. Part of what made this donation so intriguing within the TCM was the cache of supplementary materials that accompanied the garments. These include the manufacturer's pattern blocks, design sketches, publicity and runway photos, and collection essays written by Cashin and Sills. These materials were matched to garments by four digit numbers, referred to in table 3-1 as Sills and Co. numbers that were written on sketches and pattern blocks, and on paper tags pinned to the garments. Photos were obvious to match to the garments and not numbered. Collection essays were matched to garments by dates that were written on the paper tags.¹²⁷ Unfortunately, these supplementary materials do not all exist for each garment or ensemble that was donated. The five selected garments and ensembles pair with two patterns, four sketches, two photos, and two essays. The chart of these selected Bonnie Cashin artifacts illustrates how the clothing coordinates with the supplementary materials (Table 3-1).

126. I took this class from Dr. Torntore during spring 2005.

127. See table 4-1 for more information about the paper tags.

Item	Sills & Co. no.	TCM object no. ¹²⁸	Date	Pattern	Sketch	Photo	Essay
Tin Lizzie Coat and Skirt	1209 (coat) 2224 (skirt)	1981.1.3a-b Perm. 2465	Fall 1962	Yes	--	Candid Runway	--
Half and Half Coatdress	2441	1981.1.4 Perm. 2466	Fall 1967	Yes	Mar. 1967	--	Fall 1967
Tweed Poncho and Pants	3842 (poncho) 2833 (pants)	1981.1.9a-c Perm. 2471	Spring 1971	--	1970	Publicity Type	Spring 1971
Tweed Suit	3215 (jacket) 2792 (skirt)	1981.1.10a-b Perm. 2473	1973	--	Aug. 1973	--	--
Big Flamenco Cape	3317	1981.1.13 Perm. 2474	1975	--	Aug. 1974	--	--

Table 3-1 Selected Bonnie Cashin artifacts

Methodology

Specifically, I used material culture methods and, more generally, history research methods to analyze the five garments. Prown¹²⁹ describes “material culture” as both a study of culture and the objects of study. Like Prown, I use the term “material culture” to refer to the method of study, and refer to the objects more precisely. Material culture is a way of investigating the past by examining objects of the past. As Prown claimed, “artifacts are primary data for the study of material culture, and, therefore, they can be used actively as evidence rather than passively as illustrations.”¹³⁰

After choosing the garments, my next step was to conduct a thorough object analysis of each garment or ensemble following Prown’s methodology for analyzing objects, in other words, Prown’s material culture method.¹³¹ This framework grounds my research in the collection making the artifacts the starting and reference point of the research. Prown explained his model in three stages. “The analysis proceeds from *description*, recording the internal evidence of the object itself; to *deduction*, interpreting the interaction between the object and the perceiver; to *speculation*, framing hypotheses and questions which lead out from the object to external evidence for testing and

128. This column contains two numbers for two different object numbering systems within the TCM. The first is the currently used three-part object number; the second is the “permanent number” used in the TCM prior to 1987.

129. Prown, “Mind in Matter.”

130. Ibid., 1.

131. Ibid.

resolution.”¹³² Even though I have modified this model somewhat, as I will describe shortly, I used the description, deduction, and speculation subheadings.

The description sections provide detailed pictures of the garments through words and images. In this stage I began by looking at the garments from top to bottom, outside to inside taking extensive notes, measurements, and photos. When writing the description sections for each garment, I found there were some missing or unclear details. So I worked back and forth from the artifacts to the writing, looking at the artifact to double-check my descriptions. Finally, to see the artifacts in a different way, I made proportional sketches of them on graph paper. Copies of these sketches are in Appendix C.

The deduction sections examine the functionality of the garments and how they would look on a woman’s figure. The deduction stage is where some of the ideas and questions, prompted by the descriptions, are introduced and partially investigated in more depth.

The speculation stage is the most changed from Prown’s conception. In Prown’s model, speculation is the stage in which the researcher develops hypotheses and determines the program of research. In this case, the goals of research were determined prior to conducting the method of research; thus, the speculation stages of this study became the beginnings of making the connections between the garments and Cashin’s broader work, her philosophy, and the marketing of the garments. The speculation process was the foundation for the themes presented in Chapter Five.

Prown pointed out that the order of the stages is important because it “keep[s] the distorting biases of the investigator’s cultural perspective in check, these stages must be undertaken in sequence and kept as discrete as possible....the closer the sequence is followed, ...and the greater the care taken with each analytical step before proceeding, the more penetrating, complex, and satisfying the final interpretation.”¹³³ Even though I kept these stages distinct as I performed them, I had particular trouble keeping them distinct as I wrote Chapter Four. Having studied Cashin’s clothing for two years for class papers as well as this project, I initially incorporated a lot of deduction, ideas about why Cashin formed a certain seam, for instance, into the description of the garments. For the sections on the Tin Lizzie and the Half and Half coatdress I wrote all three stages at one

132. Ibid., 7.

133. Ibid., 7.

time. Once I noticed the problem of mixing stages together, I wrote the descriptions of the last three artifacts without moving to the next stage immediately. There were still ideas about interaction with the object, which I had to jot down elsewhere, but combining the writing of one stage of the model for *all garments* rather than combining all stages for one garment or ensemble helped me maintain one frame of mind about describing each garment. By doing this I also distinguished for the reader between information from the source and information I interpreted. Howell and Prevenier claim this is an important responsibility of the historian.¹³⁴

I modified Prown's model with the framework of visual analysis as described by Taylor¹³⁵ to analyze the primary source images in the TCM and other collections. In *The Study of Dress History*, Taylor¹³⁶ reviews the special issues of images and offers questions to ask of the images such as: why were they created, who made them, who bought them, what were the attitudes of the image maker to the subject, what were the motives of the image maker. She also problematizes and promotes the use of specific genres for dress history study by discussing the pros and cons of several genres and their unique issues. By following this framework I was better able to analyze the information provided by the primary source images I used.

I overlaid this model with the history research methods of understanding and questioning sources. As Howell and Prevenier state, "reliability [of sources] is a stubbornly elusive goal...nevertheless...critical analysis of sources is the basis of good historical scholarship."¹³⁷ Primary sources are the artifacts that originated in the time period that is the focus of study. Primary sources are important because "critical engagement with the records of the past can produce useful knowledge about the past."¹³⁸ For this paper, my primary sources are 1) the clothing artifacts which I analyzed using Prown's model,¹³⁹ 2) the other materials that were part of the Sills donation, 3) articles from contemporaneous news media, and 4) advertising and photo spreads or tear sheets¹⁴⁰ in contemporaneous fashion magazines.

134. Howell and Prevenier, *From Reliable Sources: An Introduction to Historical Methods*, 146.

135. Taylor, *The Study of Dress*.

136. Ibid.

137. Howell and Prevenier, *From Reliable Sources*, 2.

138. Howell and Prevenier, *From Reliable Sources*, 3.

139. Prown, "Mind in Matter."

140. I refer to photo spreads as those I found in magazines and tear sheets as pages torn from magazines and archived.

The press photos, collections essays, and patterns that are part of the Sills donation were created at the same time as the garments as part of the manufacturing and marketing process. Compared to the garments as stand-alone artifacts, these supplementary materials add significance and value to the collection by broadening the picture of the designer and her work within both manufacturing and marketing contexts. We know the designer's titles for the garments and can see their evolution in her sketches. Interpretation of the garments connects them to Cashin's process and inspiration and shows how the garments and Cashin's brand were marketed by connecting the runway garments to the marketing materials. My goal was to connect this work with what was advertised to the public to see how her work changed and/or remained the same as it transitioned from her designs to consumer products. This goal was not fully realized because I was not able to locate enough primary source material like tear sheets without reaching beyond the scope of this project. My findings are detailed in Chapter Four.

Some of the literature about Cashin includes primary sources. The newspaper and magazine articles written about her work at the time it was sold are great examples of the popular perception of her work at the time it was marketed to the public. The article for *Current Biography*¹⁴¹ and the interview for *The Creative Experience*¹⁴² and *American Fabrics*¹⁴³ for example, are primary sources that reveal her philosophy and design process.

Advertising in fashion magazines is another primary source. I was able to find photo spreads and advertisements of Cashin garments in *Vogue*, *Harper's Bazaar*, and in the Cashin file at the Fashion Institute of Technology. Advertisements were important in determining if the message and feel of advertising resembled her philosophy. In order to keep the scope of my research grounded in the collection I contained my search of advertising and other media to the seasons represented by the garments I chose. I did not find tear sheets.

Secondary sources are those documents that interpret something that occurred in the past. Iverson's writings are all secondary sources as are the bulk of the publications in

141. "Bonnie Cashin," in *Current Biography Yearbook*.

142. Rosner and Abt, *The Creative Experience*.

143. *American Fabrics and Fashions*, "Round Table."

the literature review of this paper. I used these to understand Cashin's larger body of work, how her philosophy and experiences shaped her work, and as background to help interpret the artifacts I studied.

Chapter 4: Data and Findings

Research centered on the five garments and ensembles identified; therefore, the data and findings are presented in terms of these artifacts. This chapter is subdivided by the garments: Tin Lizzie Coat and Knit Skirt, Half and Half Coatsdress, Tweed Poncho and Pants, Tweed Suit, and Big Flamenco Cape. Sections about each artifact are further divided into description, deduction (my observations about how the garments relate to the body of a potential wearer), and speculation (connections between the garments studied and Cashin's work, her designs, philosophy and marketing). Chapter Five pulls this process together and relates all five garments and ensembles to each other through a thematic analysis of my findings.

The names used for the garments are those indicated on the appraisal or the sketch of the garment; they were designated either by Cashin or Sills. Each artifact has an object number, which is a unique number within the TCM. This three-part number is listed in parenthesis following the first mention of the garment in each section.¹⁴⁴ When introducing each garment or ensemble I also included the manufacturer's number that is written on circular paper tags attached to each garment. These may help future Cashin researchers since they are closely associated with individual Cashin designs. I found these four-digit numbers written on designer sketches, publicity photos, the TCM pattern blocks, and on the appraisal for the Sills donation to ISU. I have also provided the dates as indicated on the paper tag for garments or as written on the coordinating sketch.

The following table provides the locations of labels with images of the labels and tags of each garment in this study (Table 4-1). In this paper the term "label" refers to the woven fabric labels with Cashin's and Sills' names that are sewn into the garments. The term "tag" refers to the circular paper tags that are pinned to the garments. This table mostly replaces descriptions of labels and tags within the specific garment sections of this chapter. It will be referred to as necessary. Such a table could also facilitate the use of this information in research involving these labels and tags. It could also provide a

144. The three-part object numbers were assigned to the Bonnie Cashin artifacts in spring 2007. Previously, these artifacts were identified by a "permanent number," a four-digit number used in the TCM before 1987. The Tin Lizzie coat and skirt were permanent number 2465, for example. See Table 3-1 for a complete list of each artifact's object and permanent numbers.

method of dating other garments and help provide a chronological approach to identifying Cashin pieces and designs.¹⁴⁵



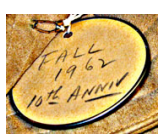

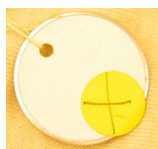






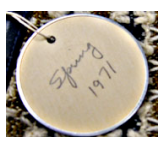






Item	Sills & Co. no.	Date	Label Location ¹⁴⁶	Label Image	Tag no.	Tag Date
Tin Lizzie Coat	1209	Fall 1962	right side seam near waist			
Knit Skirt	2224	not on tag	--	--		
Half and Half Coadress	2441	Fall 1967	right side seam near waist			
Tweed Poncho	3842	Spring 1971	--	--		
Tweed Pants	2833	Spring 1971	--	--		
Tweed Suit Jacket	3215	1973	lower right pocket			
Tweed Suit Skirt	2792	1973	--	--	--	--
Big Flamenco Cape	3317	1975	center back bellow the collar			

Table 4-1 Garment labels and tags¹⁴⁷

145. For example the Vintage Fashion Guild website shows images of several Bonnie Cashin labels to help consumers and collectors identify and date Cashin's designs. See http://www.vintagefashionguild.org/component/option,com_alphacontent/section,6/cat,59/task,view/id,126/Itemid,100/.

146. Based on the perspective of a potential wearer.

Clearly the label changed over time, but the narrow range of garments here means a lengthy discussion of labels is outside the realm of this study. Labels were possibly left off garments not intended for production and lower body garments that were part of matching ensembles. The colored stickers and markings on the tags are likely codes regarding production or design; however, I found no information related to the use of tags or any notations about Cashin's or Sills' use of model numbers. The "x" on the tags of the knit skirt and tweed poncho was possibly a sign to not produce that garment. Other information on the use of these tags in the manufacturing process remains a mystery. In Cashin archives, I found no clues regarding the yellow stickers, green sticker, why the skirt has no tag, or the black dot and second four-digit number on the suit jacket tag.

All five of these garments and ensembles are soiled from what seems to be accumulated grim from warehouse storage. The Tin Lizzie coat was more obviously soiled than the other garments, but after handling them with white gloves I noticed all the garments were soiled enough to make the gloves dingy after a few minutes. In my observation, none of these garments show signs of regular wear.

Since these artifacts are garments, designed with the wearer in mind, as I describe them I use right and left from the point of view of a potential wearer. This is also the case in the "label location" column of Table 4-1. As part of the description stage, I made measured drawings of each garment on graph paper. Rather than list all of the measurements here as text, as they do not provide critical information for the deduction and speculation stages, I have included the measured drawings in Appendix C. In this chapter I included measurements where absolutely necessary for clarification. The measured drawings were part of the process of the description stage of analysis and made to provide object identification and descriptive cataloguing for the TCM artifacts. Measurements were not taken for pattern-making or garment-sizing purposes, although these are common research methods in material culture object studies. While we do not know the fit size of these Cashin garments (such as misses 8), waist measurements, for example, could be compared to a standard size chart from the time period of the garment for additional fashion and design information.

147. Tag images were altered to enhance readability. Tag sticker colors are as follows—yellow: Tin Lizzie coat, knit skirt, Half and Half coatdress; off-white: tweed poncho; fluorescent green with black dot: tweed suit; green: Big Flamenco cape.

Tin Lizzie Coat and Knit Skirt

Description

The “Tin Lizzie” coat (1981.1.3a) and knit skirt (1981.1.3b) are Sills and Co. numbers #1209 (coat) and #2224 (skirt), both were dated fall 1962 in the appraisal from 1981. A pattern block (1981.1.15) and a runway photo with a caption (1981.1.33a, b) accompanied these garments.

The Tin Lizzie coat is beige suede, approximately knee length with a rolled collar,¹⁴⁸ long sleeves, and two gold-colored metal buckles at center front (Figure 4-1). The coat measures 41.5 inches long from the top of the collar to the hem and 29.5 inches wide across the front hem from side seam to side seam. The coat has an A-line silhouette, created and enhanced by several design features. Raglan sleeves¹⁴⁹ reinforce the A-line silhouette of the body since they repeat the angle of the silhouette. The raglan sleeves are slightly S-curved (Figure 4-2). The pattern block shows the shape of the seam joining the front body section and the sleeve (Figure 4-3).

The two brass buckles, one tucked under the collar and one at the waist seam, are the only closures. They are identical in size and shape. Carefully shaped, topstitched leather straps form the two sides of each (Figure 4-4). These buckles are the outstanding design element of this coat. The simple silhouette and single, neutral color material provide a plain background and focus attention on the buckles.

Topstitching is another feature of this coat. The edge of the collar, edges of the center front opening, raglan seams, the upper sleeve seams, and the waist seams are all double topstitched; where appropriate, these are flat felled¹⁵⁰ seams. The bottoms of the sleeves (Figure 4-5) and the hem have four rows of topstitching. The remaining seams, the side seams, under arm seams, and center back seam are not topstitched. Along the waist seam are two large pockets that measure 5 inches wide by 8 inches deep (Figure 4-6). They are located close to either side of the buckle at the waist. A circular tag from Sills and Co. pinned to the sleeve of the coat identifies the season “Fall 1962.”

148. A rolled collar is one that first stands up from the edge of the neck and then rests on the garment. See *Reader's Digest Complete Guide to Sewing*, 224.

149. The term raglan describes a sleeve seam that extends from the neckline to the under arm. See *Reader's Digest Complete Guide to Sewing*, 270.

150. Flat felled seams are a traditional seam on denim jeans, raw edges are first exposed on the right side of the garment then rolled under to one side of the seam and stitched. The result is two rows of stitching per seam. See *Reader's Digest Complete Guide to Sewing*, 162.

The inside lining of the coat is wool jersey dyed-to-match the coat's suede. On the inside left front is an interior purse, a suede pocket attached to the lining with a purse frame opening (Figure 4-7). The lining of this purse is plain weave cotton plaid. The frame is 5 inches wide and the pocket is 8 inches deep. Near the right side seam a "Bonnie Cashin Design Inc. Sills and Co." label is stitched to the lining (Figure 4-8). This garment is completely machine sewn with excellent precision. Corners and seams are flawless; intersections of fabric meet perfectly. Non-woven sew-in interfacing was used to stabilize and add body to the front edges. There is no evidence of interfacing in any other part of the garment except the suede straps of the buckles. These have a middle layer of heavy canvas or paper.

The coat was soiled on the collar and on the front from the shoulders to just below the front pockets. There is a green triangular shaped stain at the right front hem. The jacket shows no signs of regular wear.

The skirt was paired with the coat in the 1981 appraisal. It is a beige wool jersey ankle-length straight skirt which is trimmed in suede along the side slits, waist, and hem. It is shaped through the hip, not gathered, and has long metal zipper at the left side. The beige jersey is the color of the coat lining and the suede trim matches the coat. The tag of the skirt has no date, instead there is an "x" on a yellow sticker, and there is no label (Table 4-1).

The coat and skirt are listed as the second item in the appraisal with a fair market value of \$1,000.00 and the description, "BEIGE SUEDE 'TIN LIZZIE' COAT. Wool jersey lined; 2 suede and gold-plated buckle closings in front; 4 rows of stitching on sleeves and hemline; front pockets...[sic] With publicity photo and original pattern. 1962." The pattern is object number 1981.1.15, and the runway photo of the coat is object number 1981.1.33a-b. (Figure 4-9). A caption with the photo reads, "The model wears 'The Tin Lizzie' coat for modern motorists in honor of the 10th (or Tin) anniversary of the Cashin Designs at Sills."

Deduction

The coat has an A-line shape from the shoulder to the hem. The top seams of the sleeves are curved and make the shoulders slope and mold to the shoulders of the wearer.

Vertical darts from each shoulder create shape over the bust area (Figure 4-2). Overall the coat is full through the torso.

As seen in the runway photo the coat is large on the model and conceals her form (Figure 4-9). The A-line shape and deep arm holes add to this largeness which would accommodate a bulky sweater, layering, and even conceal a large wallet in the deep pockets. The wide openings of the pockets make them easily accessible, but their position prevents them from being comfortable hand warmers and bulky objects would perhaps cause the pockets to hang open. The interior purse is deep with a narrower opening at the top than bottom. This would be suitable for smaller objects, like change or a tube of lipstick. The fact that this attached purse latches makes it possible to keep small things without carrying a purse. The wearer would not have to worry that coins would fall to the floor when the coat was tossed over a chair.

When worn, the skirt would lie straight and flat, like a tube. Since it is knit, it would move with the body and be comfortable to wear; however, as a knit its life span would be limited, the knees and across the rear could possibly become baggy with use over time. The skirt is wool, which would provide some longevity over cotton that shows this type of wear more quickly than wool. The model in the photo did not wear the skirt, and until I looked at the appraisal I did not think the skirt was paired with the coat. The appraisal seems to indicate that they were intended to go together, as though they were cataloged together in Sills' warehouse; however, the publicity photo seems to indicate that the coat was sold individually. Perhaps the "x" on the tag of the knit skirt is a code that although the skirt was designed for the coat, it was not produced.

Tin anniversary is a reference to the traditional tenth wedding anniversary gift of something made of tin. Cashin's first line with Sills debuted in 1953.¹⁵¹ The coat is tagged with the date "Fall 1962," the corresponding collection essay is dated "Fall-Winter 1962-63" and opens with the mention of Cashin's tenth anniversary with Sills. "Tin-Lizzie" was a nickname for the Ford Model-T, which was produced from about 1908 to 1927.¹⁵² This coat was for "modern motorists," the model in the photo also wears driving gloves and a motoring veil to complete the duster look.¹⁵³

151. Lake, "Timeline."

152. Stern, *Tin Lizzie*.

153. A duster is an early twentieth century protective garment for motoring. A duster was usually linen and worn by women passengers to protect their clothing from road dust.

Speculation

Cashin often mentioned car riding or driving in collection essays. Her numerous references to driving indicate this is an activity she enjoyed. It's worth noting that she spent several years as a teenager and as an adult in Los Angeles, a city long known for its car culture. This coat was designed with that activity in mind. More than just looking like an early twentieth century duster, the outside pockets can be accessed while the wearer is sitting, and the length facilitates the movement of getting in and out of a car. Dusters were often made from linen and worn by women who were frequently passengers and rarely drivers in early automobiles. Cashin's Tin Lizzie coat was made for women who were driving themselves and made from a rugged material that symbolized women's more active lives since the material could withstand abrasion and heavy use.

The TCM photo was taken at a Cashin runway show. Many such photos were featured in *Women's Wear Daily* in articles about her collections. Those photos also show a series of sketches enlarged on the walls in the background. The size and uniform presentation makes it likely that they were put up as a backdrop for the show. An alternative might be that the show was staged in her studio. Cashin was known to decorate with her own sketches, but descriptions indicate that sketches in her studio varied in size and were more jumbled. At the Young Research Library I found two publicity photos of this coat (Figures 4-10, 4-11). These both show the same knee-high cowhide boots and style of driving gloves worn in the TCM photo. A *Vogue* advertisement from 1963 featured a similar coat, not by Cashin, in suede with the same buckles and exterior pockets (Figure 4-12). Evidence of this coat at a runway show, in publicity photos for advertisements, and a copied version strongly suggest that the Tin Lizzie in the TCM is a model or sample of a design that was produced and sold.

Other publicity photos do not show a long skirt. This seems to be more evidence that the coat was not sold with the skirt. Cashin did produce many separates as part of her collections, meant to mix and match at the wearer's discretion. This is explained in the collection essays and descriptions of the "Cashin look" layering. Collection essays often implored buyers and retailers to maintain the broad mix of colors and styles that made up each collection. Collection essays and news articles described Cashin's layered look, which often included knit skirts of varying lengths. This beige knit skirt might have been a layering piece, rather than directly being paired with the coat. If it was a layering piece,

then why were the skirt and coat paired in the appraisal, why is the “x” on the tag, and why is there no label? The best explanation is that they were designed to go together and the skirt was decided against after the model garments were sewn. I did not find any information about the use of the tags or at what stage labels were applied to garments; therefore, I am speculating on the meaning of the “x” and the lack of a label.

The Tin Lizzie was designed for the fall 1962 collection. Major features that show Cashin’s touch are the buckles, topstitching, and pockets. The buckles on the Tin Lizzie coat including the shaped leather pieces that fasten them to the coat were the closures on many of Cashin’s coat designs for a number of years. Rows of topstitching on the cuffs and hem are repeated on the cuffs, hems, collars, and hoods of other coats and ponchos made of suede, leather, woven tweed, and plaid. Even the leather mandarin collar on the TCM Flamenco cape shares this detail. The outside pockets of the Tin Lizzie are large, very typical of Cashin’s work. In 1972, ten years after the Tin Lizzie was produced, Morris wrote about Cashin’s next season: “the big pockets on her big coats are for carrying paperback books.”¹⁵⁴ The interior purse-pocket of the Tin Lizzie is signature Cashin. These were commonly called “security pockets” since they were like a hidden purse.¹⁵⁵

Half and Half Coaldress

Description

The “Half and Half” coaldress (1981.1.4) dated fall 1967 was accompanied by a pattern block (1981.1.16), a sketch (1981.1.25), and a collection essay (1981.1.22), that corresponds to the date of the coaldress, all received as part of the donation from Sills. The Sills and Co. number for the coaldress was #2441. The name “Half and Half” is listed in the description in the appraisal.

The coaldress was constructed from army green wool in the bodice portion and sleeves with dyed-to-match leather for the collar, cuffs, belt, and skirt (Figure 4-13). The Half and Half coaldress has design features similar to a shirtwaist dress like a simple collar, button-down front, and belted waist; while the heaviness of the material and large pockets are similar to a coat. From top to bottom the major features of the Half and Half

154. Morris, "For Bonnie Cashin, It's a Time to Shine."

155. Preston, "The Modern Heirloom."

coatdress are: a leather collar, bodice with all-in-one sleeves¹⁵⁶ in textured wool fabric, leather cuffs, brass buttons, attached leather belt with brass buckle, leather skirt, and large in-seam pockets outlined by topstitching.

The coatdress has a rolled leather collar, similar in size to that of the Tin Lizzie, with two rows of topstitching. There are seven flat 3/4 inch brass buttons that span the length of the center front. They are highly polished and untarnished; however, the two on either side of the belt buckle are slightly scratched, the fourth is also missing some brass plating, and the plating of the fifth is chipped (Figure 4-14). Each button is supported from behind by a 1/2-inch brown plastic button (Figure 4-15). The wool fabric is a woven from fine bouclé¹⁵⁷ and straight yarns in the weft and straight yarn alone in the warp. The effect is a fine nubby texture (Figure 4-16). There are four bodice-sleeve pieces, front right, front left, back right, and back left. The bottoms of the sleeves are finished in a 2-inch band of leather and faced with 2 inches of the wool fabric. The layers of leather and wool fabric facing make the cuffs bulky. From neck to cuff the sleeves were cut at about a 30 to 35 degree angle. The sleeves are wide and barely taper to the cuff. The collar is faced with leather at center back, which continues to the front of the collar and down the center front opening.

The coatdress measures 21.5 inches across the waist, from side seam to side seam, where the attached belt is located. This belt is 2 inches wide and is topstitched along the edges. The brass buckle is 3.5 inches wide by 2 inches tall and is curved horizontally toward the body (Figure 4-17). The buckle latches with a hook at the back through a slot on the left (Figure 4-18). Large in-seam pockets were made visible from the outside of the skirt with topstitching that outlines their shape (Figure 4-19). The pockets were constructed from two overlapping pieces of wool jersey attached, via the topstitching, to the inside of the skirt. Each pocket is 8 inches wide and 10.5 inches deep with a 7.5-inch opening at each side seam.

The coatdress is fully lined in army green wool jersey; the same material as the pocket interiors. The lining was sewn with all-in-one sleeves from three pieces: front

156. An all-in-one sleeve is a sleeve design in which the bodice and sleeve are cut in one piece so no seam separates the sleeve from the body of the garment. See *Reader's Digest Complete Guide to Sewing*, 266.

157. The term bouclé refers to a yarn and to fabric made from it. Bouclé yarn looks like a string of loops. See *Reader's Digest Complete Guide to Sewing*, 72.

right, front left, and back. The lining was sewn to the facings of the collar, sides, and cuffs concealing all raw edges. At the hem, the lining is free, attached by two thread chains at the left seam and center back. A third chain at the right seam is loose from the lining. The lining hem was blind stitched at 2 inches. The hem of the leather skirt was pressed under at 1 to 1.25 inches with bias tape sewn to the bottom 7/8 inch. Non-woven interfacing was used to reinforce the pocket openings and add body to the center front opening at both sides. The side seams of the leather skirt were pressed open on the inside and staystitched.¹⁵⁸ The inside finish of the leather of the skirt is abraded on the back right and front left pieces. The back left and front right pieces, however, do not show this wear. The Sills-Cashin label was sewn to the inside right seam (Figure 4-20).

The pattern blocks donated with this garment are incomplete and composed of two types of paper. The pattern includes all pieces cut in leather, the front and back of the collar, along with an interior muslin piece for the collar, the facings of the collar and button placket, the cuffs, belt, and the front and back of the skirt. Many pieces are double in each type of paper, manila colored heavy paper and hard grey board. The two skirt pieces are only in grey board and the facings are only in manila paper. Three more pieces¹⁵⁹ in manila paper don't seem to have been included in the garment. There are no bodice pattern pieces.

The sketch donated with the Half and Half coatdress is an 8.5 by 11 photocopy (Figure 4-21). At the top left corner are the words "mouse leather" and "mouse chinchilla." Under this is the number #2441. This is the same number as the manufacturer number from the circular tag on the coatdress. The sketch is dated "March 1967." The woman in the sketch is wearing a round hat, hoop earrings, and the coatdress. The feet are cut off in the copy. The woman is holding a bag in her right hand and a stick or leash in her left, the end of which is cut off at the bottom of the page. Notes on the coatdress sketch indicate the collar is leather, the bodice portion is cloth, the belt is at a seam, and the skirt is leather.

158. Staystitching refers to stitching that is done through one layer of fabric near a cut edge to prevent raveling or stretching. It may be done soon after a pattern piece is cut or after a seam is sewn. See *Reader's Digest Complete Guide to Sewing*, 156.

159. It is unclear what the shapes of these pieces were intended to be since they did not match any parts of the coatdress even though each piece is labeled with the Sills and Co. number.

Deduction

This coat is much stiffer than the Tin Lizzie and would be even more concealing of the wearer's form and anything kept in the large pockets. The proportionally high waist and the way the stiff leather skirt stands away from the body, emphasizes the A-line shape. The all-in-one sleeve design has deep armholes and broad sleeves that aid freedom of movement. Since the fabric is bulky, the armholes and sleeves must be larger for the wearer to be comfortable. The size, bulk of the fabric, and stiffness of the leather become a form of their own on the wearer. The pockets are located such that they are comfortable hand warmers.

The sketch and coatdress closely resemble each other. This would indicate that the coatdress was constructed very closely to Cashin's specifications. The collar, cuffs, belt, buckle, and buttons look as they do on the finished product. The only detail missing is the pockets, which are not drawn or labeled on the sketch. The sketch provides critical information; Cashin's names for the colors and fabrics are listed on the sketch and can be traced through other Cashin items and seasonal collections.

Speculation

The Cashin-Sills duo was known for using high-grade leather and suede and the expert finishes of these materials included dyeing the leather to match fabric colors, as this coatdress illustrates. This coatdress is also a great example of her collaboration with Sills, and of his expertise in leather craft. Without his skill she would not likely have been known for her amazing creations in leather or for helping initiate the use of leather in fashion.

The term "Half and Half" related to the TCM coatdress only appeared in the appraisal done at the time the TCM received the donation from Sills; however, at the Young Research Library I found other sketches done the same year titled "Half & Half" showing a similar garment. One of these sketches is numbered #4406 and has a leather collar, bodice, and sleeves, dated "April 1967," possibly intended for the fall 1967 collection with the TCM coatdress (Figure 4-22). The term "coatdress" was listed on 1981 appraisal. The heavy materials and wool knit lining indicate that it was perhaps designed to be a coat not a dress.

The Half and Half coatdress was designed for the fall 1967 collection and is recognizably Cashin in its combination of textured fabric and dyed-to-match slick leather, all-in-one sleeve, and large topstitched pockets. The material combination is probably the reason for the moniker “Half and Half” that was given, by Cashin, to many similar garments over a period of years. In 1974, Preston wrote in the *New York Post*, “coats and suits...look new in combinations of tweed and leather, sometimes as much as Half and Half.”¹⁶⁰ The fact that these two materials match in color is also notable. Preston states, “leathers [are] exactly matched to tweeds.”¹⁶¹ In 1973, *Women’s Wear Daily* states, “Ms. Cashin is also faithful to her...dyed-to-match palette of kidskins, suedes, and canvases.”¹⁶² Although these articles are dated more than five years after the design of this Half and Half coat, they remain pertinent to describing her earlier aesthetic since her collections maintained so much in common over the decades. The all-in-one sleeve is also reminiscent of her famous Noh coat, as a variation on the kimono, and appears in many of her designs in a range of fabrics from light and flowing jerseys to bulky tweed and the heavy pile fabric of the Half and Half coat. The pockets of this coat are as large as the outside pockets of the Tin Lizzie, they are also outlined in a single row of topstitching, and open off the side seam. Many of Cashin’s slick leather skirts and coats share this detail.

The bodice of this coatdress is a manipulation of the Noh coat (Figure 4-23). The Noh coat was a T-shaped garment, esteemed for its simplicity, which Cashin produced many times in different fabrics with different closures. She developed the Noh coat from the shape of a Japanese kimono and took the name from a traditional Japanese theater style. The bodice of the TCM coatdress is not quite a T-shape, but the armholes are deep and the sleeves are cut in one with the body, like the Noh coat.

Tweed Poncho and Pants

Description

The poncho (1981.1.9a), pants (1981.1.9b), and the thin leather tie-belt (1981.1.9c) are Sills and Co. number #3842 (poncho with belt) and #2833 (pants) and

160. Preston, "The Modern Heirloom."

161. Ibid.

162. *Women's Wear Daily*, "Now: Fall in New York: Bonnie Cashin," 12.

dated spring 1971. This ensemble was accompanied by a sketch (1981.1.29), a publicity photo (1981.1.35), and corresponds to a collection essay dated spring 1971 (1981.1.23), the same date as the garments.

The tweed poncho and pants ensemble was sewn from heavily textured woven tweed fabric with blue, tan, and off-white textured wool yarns (Figures 4-24). The texture of this fabric is chunky with a pattern of slightly diamond and bowtie shapes that run horizontally across the poncho and the pants (Figure 4-25). The effect creates both an all-over texture and narrow stripes of blue and tan on white.

The poncho is a short, wide rectangle with long chunky fringe. It fastens with a brass toggle at the collar and a thin blue leather tie that fits through holes at the front and ties at the waist. It is trimmed with a half inch of blue leather piping at the sides and center front opening. At the sides, the leather trim outlines the deep armholes and then joins to form one trim under the armhole to the top of the fringe. At the center front, the leather trims the right and left sides of the opening from the top of the stand collar to the top of the fringe. The thin leather tie is 68 inches long and one half inch wide. When tied the thin leather strip cinches the middle of the poncho between the two holes in the front, leaving the sides and back loose (Figure 4-26). The poncho was cut from two pieces of fabric that are joined at the center back and below the armholes and folded at the shoulders. The stand collar fits close to and covers the neck. The 13 inch long fringe is made of wool yarns of varying thicknesses in the same off-white found in the fabric, and was applied to the hem of the poncho.

The pant waist was finished with a long blue leather strip, like the tie-belt, that forms the waistband and extends about 41 inches off each side at the side zipper (Figure 4-27). The waist curves down slightly from the sides to the middle in the front and back, as do most skirt and pants patterns. The pants are fitted to the body by two darts on the front and two on the back. In-seam pockets were sewn from light weight synthetic in blue that matches the leather. The pockets, which are 7.5 inches wide and 10.5 inches long, are gathered into the waist. Each was sewn from one piece of fabric folded on one side and sewn across the bottom and into the side seams of the pants. On the left side, the pocket conceals the zipper. The pant legs were cut almost straight from the thigh to the hem, but the woven pattern of the fabric on the leg seams shows that the pant legs are flared slightly from the knee to the hem; the seam does not follow a straight grain or single

thread. Neither the poncho nor pants have a label. The tag on the poncho has a yellow sticker with an “x.”

The sketch (1981.1.29) of the poncho and pants that accompanies this ensemble includes a typical Cashin quote describing the ensemble: “spring is poncho time add to your collection this spongy knitedy tweed with it’s [sic] own pants to match” (Figure 4-28). A swatch of fabric was photocopied at the top right. The same Sills and Co. numbers appear on the sketch, #3842 for the poncho and #2833 for the pants (#2847 has been crossed out), but it was dated 1970 whereas the tags of the poncho and pants were dated spring 1971. The poncho has a stand collar, waist tie, and sewn armholes, like the actual poncho. The pants were drawn to look like leggings. The smaller figure to the right wears a boat neck top numbered #2846. Notes to the side indicate the top is “pheasant jersey,” there is “leather binding” tied at the waist, and an instruction to “keep pants narrow.”

The photo is of a smiling model wearing the poncho and pants (Figure 4-29). This poncho is longer than the one in the collection. The model also wears a tight hood, gauntlet gloves, and ballet flats.

Deduction

The open poncho allows freedom of movement. Since the fabric below the armholes is not tucked into a belt; a woman wearing this could move her arms freely in any direction. The control of the mass of fabric at the front with the tie means the large front of the poncho does not get in the way of arm movement. Tying in this manner then is a practical solution, which provides freedom of movement and introduces a feminine outline to the poncho silhouette. The fringe is long and napped so it sticks together easily.

On the body, the pants would fit close through the thighs, but are slightly flared at the hem. The spongy wool tweed would trap air and keep the wearer warm. The fabric is also a little stretchy so although they are fitted through the thigh, they would be comfortable to move in.

The sketch closely resembles the poncho; both are sewn at the sides and not quite knee length including the fringe. The pattern of the colors, the yarn, and the weave structure all contribute to the “spongy, knitedy” texture described in the sketch and emphasized by the long fringe that is set off by the leather trim.

The poncho in the photo is much longer and open below the armholes. In the photo the poncho extends to the model's thigh, before the fringe. The TCM poncho only extends a few inches below the waist. The TCM poncho could not be worn as a shawl since it is sewn below the armholes. It is clear that the fabric of the two is the same, but the collar in the photo was hidden in the folds as the model wrapped the poncho over her shoulder. There does not appear to be a place for a waist tie, though it might have been removed for the photo. Like the knit skirt for the Tin Lizzie there is an "x" on the poncho's tag and no label in the poncho. It is likely that the pants were produced with the different poncho and the shorter poncho was decided against.

Speculation

Cashin included many wrap garments in her collections, most of them adapted from ethnic and historical clothing. Latin American ponchos and European capes were very common adaptations for her. The simple form and fringe of this poncho evoke ponchos of the masculine utilitarian garments from Latin America. Cashin juxtaposed this with modern fabric and a feminine silhouette. Ethnic references in contemporary clothing were a recurring theme in her work; to her this manipulation represented the modern life aspects of a shrinking world and a global culture.¹⁶³

Cashin also felt strongly about not "torturing" fabric.¹⁶⁴ Her reverence for fabric led her to develop simple garment shapes that required few seams. The poncho is an excellent example of leaving the fabric alone and she used this technique in numerous collections. In 1971, she said, "of course, you'll always find the poncho here...the most successful non-cut-up body-covering in history."¹⁶⁵

The differences between the sketch, garment, and photo appear to indicate a change in the ensemble over time as the design was tested and modified. Perhaps the TCM poncho was only a test and the longer poncho in the publicity photo was put into production instead. Although they may have been produced since she often used one fabric on many garments within a collection and over the course of several collections.

163. Iverson, "'Early' Bonnie Cashin."

164. Cashin and Sills, "Fall-Winter 1962-'63 Press Preview May 23rd-Opening May 24th, 1962" (collection essay).

165. Cashin and Sills, "Spring Opening Nov. 4, 1971" (collection essay), 4.

At the Young Research Library I found two contact sheets of a model posing in the poncho and pants.¹⁶⁶ One of the slides matches the publicity photo in the TCM collection. From these it is clear the collar is different than the poncho in the collection and that there is no place for a waist tie. I also found a sketch of a poncho, numbered #2842 that appears to be the one in the TCM publicity photo and contact sheet (Figure 4-30). The fabric swatch, collar, and length match the publicity photo. This sketch is dated August 1970 (Figure 4-30). A note at the top of the new sketch states, “please do me a new poncho—all fringy swingy leather edged.” There are prices at the bottom “2842 \$89.75 \$165.00” and “2842/2833 \$139.75 \$250.00.” The TCM pants are tagged #2833; they are not drawn on the new sketch. Based on the notes mentioning “spring,” and a “new poncho,” I would surmise that the shorter poncho came first. The TCM publicity photo is perhaps a clue that the longer poncho and the pants were produced later and sold. The prices appear to be suggestions for the wholesale and retail prices for the poncho alone and then the ensemble of poncho and pants. The second prices listed are close to retail prices listed on advertisements of her clothing from the 1960s and 70s. This would mean that for the poncho the mark-up is about 80%, and for the ensemble the mark-up is about 85%. This mark-up rate is at the low end of typical mark-up rates for that time; this is possibly evidence of Sills and Co.’s attempts to absorb costs, which he mentions in a 1965 collection essay.¹⁶⁷

It is likely this poncho was designed for the spring 1971 collection for which TCM has a collection essay. Cashin says this collection is “an ode to birds, wings, flight, [and] fresh-air;”¹⁶⁸ hence the essay title, “If a bird can fly, why can’t I?”¹⁶⁹ This essay states the concept of “the whole cape-mantle-poncho-fling thing”¹⁷⁰ is one that is enduring and evolving. A concluding section includes accessories: “fling coverings...dramatic gloves...in lively colors...‘body’ bags...to wear under coat[s]...the smooth hooded head...hardware battenings...and the thong tieings.”¹⁷¹ Credits list “Cashin-Carry bags from Coach...Bonnie Cashin gloves from Crescendoe...[and] ballet

166. Two contact sheets from the Bonnie Cashin Collection (collection 440), Department of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA, box 28, folder 2, images 1 and 15.

167. Cashin and Sills, "Fall-Winter 1964-65" (collection essay).

168. Cashin and Sills, "Sills Spring 1971—Opening Nov. 12, 1970" (collection essay), 2.

169. *Ibid.*, cover page.

170. *Ibid.*, 2.

171. *Ibid.*, 4.

slippers from Capezio.”¹⁷² The photo illustrates the hooded head, gauntlet gloves, and ballet flats. These accessories combined with the way the model wraps the poncho make the photo a good example of the total “Cashin look.”

The fringe, outlining of leather, and closures are also details characteristic of her work. In 1969, a preview of her collection in *Women's Wear Daily* mentions, “those famous giant tweeds.”¹⁷³ On the TCM sketch of this ensemble, she described the fabric as “spongy knitedy tweed.” I found a swatch of this fabric on the sketch in the archive at the Young Research Library (Figure 4-30). She often used a single fabric in a number of different garments and would use particular fabrics over many seasons. Various chunky tweeds were an important part of many of her collections for Sills and Co. She once suggested, “wouldn’t it be nice if I could get a tweed by spinning together a bird’s nest and a spider’s web.”¹⁷⁴ This comment is surprisingly descriptive of this outfit, which is a bit feathery and a bit sticky. In 1975 another collection essay introduces “another beautiful brace of tweedy weedies.”¹⁷⁵ Many of these textured wool fabrics were woven by small mills in Britain, which produced special runs of fabric to Cashin’s specifications.¹⁷⁶ “Pheasant,” as written on the sketch, is the name of the blue color of the leather in the poncho and pants. By naming the color after the bird Cashin associated her designs with the scenery of pheasants and long country walks on crisp autumn days. She named many of her colors after the names of birds and used other bird-related imagery, such as a “brace of tweedy weedies.”¹⁷⁷ By doing so she evoked nature and the spirit of freedom and travel and imbued her clothing with her lifestyle of country living and extensive travel.

Cashin began incorporating fringe in her garment designs in 1957 in homage to Native American dress history and continued to include fringed pieces in each ready-to-wear collection for Sills and Co.¹⁷⁸ In the 1970s, the period when this outfit was designed, fringe was a fashion trend. In a 1975 collection essay she mentioned a “long

172. Ibid., 4.

173. *Women's Wear Daily*, “Cashin in Advance.”

174. Iverson, “Main Page.”

175. Cashin and Sills, “Fall Opening May 1, 1975” (collection essay), 3.

176. For example: Cashin and Sills, “Fall Opening May 1, 1975” (collection essay); Cashin and Sills, “Fall Opening May 3, 1973” (collection essay); and Cashin and Sills, “Spring Opening November, 6 1974” (collection essay).

177. Cashin and Sills, “Fall Opening May 1, 1975” (collection essay).

178. Iverson, “Chic is Where You Find It.”

love of [American] Indian lore.”¹⁷⁹ I found more fringed designs both in her sketches and press images of the 1970s than the 1960s when looking through external archives. It seems she was able to capitalize on the fringe trend by designing and selling more fringe garments in the 1970s than previously.

The sides of the poncho and the narrow waistband of the pants were trimmed in leather. An outlining of leather is possibly the most repeated detail of her work in her collections for Sills and Co. Philip Sills was a leather manufacturer but agreed to produce Cashin’s designs in any fabric as long as they included leather or suede.¹⁸⁰ Thin leather ties were used as belts on many of her coats seen in sketches and magazine photos. The collar of the poncho is closed with a toggle clasp and the leather waistband of the pants extends to a long tie, both closures are typical of her work. The brass toggle is perhaps the most iconic of her work, and, fittingly it is the closure with a story: she borrowed it from the hardware used to fasten the top of her convertible sports car.¹⁸¹

Tweed Suit

Description

This suit, like the poncho and pants, was sewn from heavily textured woven tweed fabric and includes a collarless jacket (1981.1.10a) and a knee length straight skirt (1981.1.10b, Figures 4-31, 4-32). These are Sills and Co. numbers #3215 (jacket) and #2792 (skirt) dated 1973. The suit was accompanied by a sketch (1981.1.30).

Both are trimmed in suede and close with toggles at the center front. The jacket was constructed simply with no darts and is unlined. The back of the jacket was cut from one piece of fabric. The set-in sleeves were sewn in two pieces that were joined with half inch, flat felled seams. Flap pockets on the sleeves are about 4.5 inches wide by 3 inches deep (Figure 4-33). Each sleeve-pocket is a leather patch sewn to the fabric inside the sleeve. From the outside, we see the suede-trimmed flap and the stitches outlining the leather rectangle. The flap is trimmed and lined in suede, the top of which was inserted between the fabric of the sleeve and the leather patch that makes the pocket. Dark blue thread is loosely tacked to the right and along the top of the right sleeve. The sleeves end

179. Cashin and Sills, "Fall Opening May 1, 1975" (collection essay), 2.

180. Wilson, "Bonnie Cashin's Inspiration."

181. Iverson, "Bonnie Cashin."

with a 4-inch vent that opens along the back seam of each sleeve and angles out to form a point. The openings are trimmed in the half-inch suede that outlines the suit.

The neck opening is curved across the back and comes to a “v” in front. The collar and center front opening are trimmed in suede, which wraps to the inside to form a facing that was topstitched. Three brass toggles are attached through the facing on the center front. There are two wide flap pockets on the lower front of the jacket, which are about 6.5 inches wide by 7 inches deep, ending at the hem. These front pockets were constructed from the jacket fabric, trimmed in suede, and stitched to the inside of the jacket (Figure 4-34). Repeating the detail of the sleeves, the side seams of the jacket body open into suede-trimmed vents 4 inches from the hem and angling out slightly on the front but are cut perpendicular to the hem on the back. The hem is horizontal across the front and curves down in back very slightly. The jacket label is attached to the right pocket on the interior (Figure 4-35).

On the skirt, the waistband, center front opening, and hem are trimmed in suede. At the center front, the suede continues on the inside to form a 1.5-inch facing through which four brass toggles are attached. The waist curves down slightly in back and front. The front right side decreases more dramatically but to the same degree from center front to the right side. There are two waist darts on the front right and left and back right and left, for a total of eight darts.

The side seams are flat felled and curve in at the hip. In-seam pockets are attached to the suede trim at the waist and measure 7 inches wide and 10 inches deep. The backs of the pockets (against the body) are of the tweed suit fabric and the fronts are brown synthetic. The topstitching on the pockets was done to hold the folded edge of the front of the skirt and to match the flat felled side seam. The edges of the pockets closest to the center front and at the bottom were sewn with French seams.¹⁸²

The fabric of this suit was woven with mustard yellow and bright, almost fluorescent, orange bouclé yarns in equal proportions in a pattern of equal length vertical and horizontal lines forming many upside down, squared “u” shapes, which measure about 1 inch square (Figure 4-32). These yarns seem to float on a background of off-

182. French seams are made by first sewing the wrong sides of the fabric together and then folding the fabric on the seam and sewing again with right sides together in order to conceal the raw edges of the fabric. See *Reader's Digest Complete Guide to Sewing*, 162.

white vertical ovals bordered by taupe. The pattern of the weave is dense and reads more as texture than pattern. The yellow and orange bouclé yarns reinforce this textural effect.

The sketch (1981.1.30; Figure 4-36) shows a woman in a wide brimmed hat with a choker necklace holding what looks like a leash; her feet and the possible dog are off the page. The suit appears more A-line and more flowing than the one in the collection. The slit in the sleeves is more dramatic and there are no sleeve-pockets. A fabric swatch that appears to match the fabric of the TCM suit was photocopied in the top right corner. The number from the jacket's tag, #3215, is at the top left. The skirt's tag number (2792) is also on the sketch. The sketch is dated "Aug. '73." A note referring to the jacket says, "2701 shape with sleeve change & cardigan neck." There are two notes on the right: "3820 bag" with a line to the sleeve and "slit" with a line to the jacket.

Deduction

Although the fabric is loose and would mold to the body, the heavy texture and boxy cut of the jacket was probably intended to conceal the form of the wearer, although, the same jacket could be worn with less ease and fit more tightly. The suede trimmed flap pockets on the sleeves draw the eye to the shoulders and visually broaden the shoulders and diminish the bust. The form of this suit echoes the classic Chanel-style suit. The main differences in the Cashin suit are the sleeve pockets and toggles. The front pockets are much larger than on a Chanel suit. The sketch does not include the sleeve pocket or toggles. The suit was not sewn with slits at the hem, as shown in the sketch, and the slits on the cuff are not as dramatic as those in the sketch.

Speculation

Like the poncho, this suit features the brass toggle closures and a suede outlining. Additionally, the pockets of the suit jacket are large and the unlined interior is well-finished. Bright colors, including orange are often mentioned in articles about her 1970s collections. In a description of her fall 1973 collection, *Women's Wear Daily* states, "one of her big themes [is] high-visibility colors."¹⁸³ A response, she claimed, to a "world of diminishing power supply and brownouts."¹⁸⁴ *Women's Wear Daily* described her fall

183. *Women's Wear Daily*, "Bonnie's Bubble."

184. Ibid.

1973 palette as “ranging from nature and earth shades to light, bright pastels.”¹⁸⁵ The bright yellow and orange in the fabric of this suit however, is “quieted” or subdued by the use of the off-white yarn in the tweed. As mentioned earlier, large pockets, like those seen in this suit, are common in her work as are unlined interiors. Neither the TCM jacket nor the skirt was lined. Edges are finished in suede trim, including the interior edges of the jacket pockets. Unlined outerwear was common in her clothing because it accommodated layering and movement, major Cashin themes.¹⁸⁶

This suit is a classic in the way a Chanel suit is classic. The suede trim and simple shape set off the complex texture that gives the suit interest. Part of Cashin’s philosophy was to design clothing women could wear for many seasons so they could build a wardrobe carefully, over time, rather than starting over each season. Cashin wrote in collections essays and spoke out publicly that the quick obsolescence of fashion did not coincide with modern living.¹⁸⁷ By mimicking the features of trim, simplicity of shape, and complex texture Cashin designed a suit that can be accepted as a classic, in the same way a Chanel suit is accepted as a classic and worn for many seasons.

It is possible she used the sleeve-pockets as a way of making this Chanel-style suit identifiably “Cashin.” They seem to lack functionality, an important part of her philosophy; perhaps she used them as symbols of her brand. Since she was well known for her pockets these sleeve-pockets might have identified her brand; however, I have found no other evidence she distorted her philosophy into a non-functional symbol. Perhaps there was some function for them “forgotten” in the passing of time.

Reference to other style numbers on the sketch of this suit show Cashin recycled design details from past seasons. The sketch indicates she transformed a previous jacket by changing the neck opening to a cardigan style and putting a slit in the cuff. This is one way she evolved and maintained the “Cashin look” with consistency.

185. *Women's Wear Daily*, "Now: Fall in New York: The Knittery."

186. She did design lined outerwear for colder weather when heavier top layers were needed. The Tin Lizzie and Half and Half coats, for example are lined in wool jersey and several collection essays mention fur-lined outerwear. See Cashin and Sills, "Fall-Winter 1961-Press Preview May 18, 1961-Opening May 22, 1961" (collection essay).

187. Klensch, "Bonnie Cashin Hates to Use the Word 'New,' But Her Fall Collection For Sills is One of the Freshest;" Cashin and Sills, "Opening Fall 1967—May 4, 1967" (collection essay); Cashin and Sills, "Spring Opening Nov. 4, 1971" (collection essay); and Cashin and Sills, "Spring Opening Nov. 6, 1974" (collection essay).

Big Flamenco Cape

Description

The “Big Flamenco Cape” (1981.1.10) was given #3317 and dated 1975 by Sills and Co. “Big Flamenco Cape” is the title on the sketch (1981.1.32) of the garment.

The Flamenco cape is a full circle cape in wool and leather (Figure 4-37). The wool is a loosely woven double weave fabric of 1.5-inch blue circles on a white ground. The major components of this cape are a stand collar with buckle, a shorter shoulder cape, and the full circle portion that makes up the body of the garment.

The blue leather stand collar is 1.75 inches high at the center back and tapers to 1.5 inches before rounding off at the center front (Figure 4-38). It has six rows of top stitching and is faced in the same leather with no topstitching; leather from the right side is rolled over and held by the upper most row of top stitching. A wide black metal hook and thread loop fasten at the base of the collar. The Sills-Cashin label is attached inside the cape at center back just below the base of the collar (Figure 4-39).

Below the collar and under the shoulder cape in the center front is a brass buckle attached below the collar with leather similar to the Tin Lizzie buckles (Figure 4-40). The shoulder cape attaches to the bottom of the stand collar. The shoulder cape is two quarter-circles of fabric with an unmatched seam at center back. The shoulder cape measures 11 inches long on both front sides and 15 inches long at the center back seam. The center back seam of the shoulder cape was pressed open and staystitched at about 3.75 inches from the collar where the seam was trimmed close and not pressed open. As a consequence of the close trimming, there is some fraying of the fabric on the outside of the shoulder cape at the intersection of the center back seam and the collar. The circular paper tag is safety pinned to the inside left of the shoulder cape (Figure 4-41, 4-42). The brass buckle is a tall rectangle with cut corners (Figure 4-40). Near the buckle on the left, fabric has been pulled and the weave is loose and distorted.

Overall, the cape is a full circle and about ankle length (Figure 4-43). There is only one seam at center back and the dot pattern is matched across the center front opening. It is unlined and the hem and center front opening are finished in leather trim. The seam at center back is bound in the same leather trim. The length from the hem to the base of the collar at center back is 45.5 inches.

Large, almost invisible, pockets were patched on either side of the center front opening (Figure 4-44). These pockets are 8.5 inches across and 10 inches deep. They are sewn to the inside and the pattern is matched. From the inside, the reverse of the pattern is blue squares separated by white lines. The pockets were perfectly fitted in this grid and each pocket is six squares wide and six squares deep with a complete outline of white (Figure 4-45).

The pattern of blue circles is aligned at the center front opening of the cape and at the front sides of the shoulder cape. The circles are close together, almost touching. They are also square-ish due to the large scale and geometry of the weave. Since the circles are so close, the white space behind them is as much a part of the pattern as the circles.

The sketch of the cape (1981.1.32), titled “Big Flamenco Cape,” shows a woman striding, completely covered by the cape (figure 4-46). The sketch includes the shoulder cape, but the collar appears shorter and closes with a tie, not a buckle. A dark vertical line on the cape could be an indication of an arm slit, but there is no note to this effect on the sketch; the TCM cape has no arm slits. A fabric swatch that matches the TCM cape is attached to the top left corner with the note “pheasant” written below and the cape in the sketch shows that same fabric pattern. The cape is numbered #3317 and the sketch is dated “August 1974.”

Deduction

This cape would engulf the wearer. The fabric is loosely woven and flows easily. In this pattern of circles, there is no background or negative space. The play between blue circles and white crosses gives an op-art look as the cape sways and swishes. On a dress form the cape did not hang open, instead the front sides overlapped. This combined with the length and extra layer over the shoulders likely makes this a very warm covering. The large pockets are an important addition, since wearing a bag would be cumbersome under the cape and impossible over the cape. There are no holes for the hands so warmth would be greatly compromised if the activities of the wearer required use of them while outside.

Speculation

The Flamenco cape was designed in 1975, and was a style frequently repeated by Cashin throughout her career with Sills and particularly in the 1970s, based on articles and advertisements found in archives. The length, stand leather collar with shoulder cape,

and leather outlining are all frequent features of her capes during this decade. A review of her fall 1973 collection states, “she continues her layering, shells, Noh coat and big, long capes.”¹⁸⁸ The fabric, buckle closure, and interior pockets are also significant. The fabric of the Flamenco cape was used for other garments. I found a swatch of it on a sketch of a different garment in the archive at the Young Research Library—the Noh coat example in figure 4-23. This buckle closure is a very similar to those on the Tin Lizzie. These two garments are more than ten years apart. Indeed her toggles, buckles, and thin leather ties are staples in her collections, used extensively each season. In the fall-winter 1964-65 collection essay she states, “favorite proven ideas and styles are never dropped.”¹⁸⁹ This cape is definitely an example of that with its repeated shape, fabric, and buckle.

The pockets are large, as was her standard, and they were deftly hidden in the pattern of the fabric. Cashin was known for high quality craftsmanship, garment interiors were no exception. “Take a good look, the insides of her unlined coats are designed as carefully as the outsides,” claims a Saks Fifth Avenue ad from the *New York Times* in 1975. The fraying on the back of the TCM cape does not fit this definition of quality. This is possible evidence that models were not sewn with the same care or, more likely, based on the high quality construction of many of the TCM models, they were tests for construction methods. Perhaps changes were made to the design before it was mass-produced. Comparing the TCM cape to an artifact that was a retailed piece, not a model, could lead to further inferences regarding quality craftsmanship, the Cashin-Sills model garments, and the manufacturing process.

This style makes it difficult to do much except stay warm. Getting in and out of a car, on and off the subway or walking up stairs would all be unmanageable in this long cape with no armholes. Cashin often claimed certain garments in her collections were for the country or for lounging, not daily city life. Long lengths in particular were for country walks or entertaining at home. “I’ve taken out my old ballet-length skirts from 1958 and worn them around town, and they just don’t work,” she said to Morris in 1970.¹⁹⁰ This long cape would therefore have been a country walk companion.

188. *Women's Wear Daily*, "Now: Fall in New York: Bonnie Cashin."

189. Cashin and Sills, "Fall-Winter 1964-65" (collection essay), 4.

190. Morris, "To Bonnie Cashin, Obsolescence in Fashion is Obsolete."

The name “Big Flamenco Cape” refers, of course to the size, but also to the Spanish music and dance style of Flamenco. Flamenco music and dance originated in southern Spain and is heavily associated with the Andalusian Gypsies.¹⁹¹ Flamenco music is very rhythmic and staccato, a feeling evoked by the blue and white pattern of the cape as it moves. The fluid fabric of the full circle cape also conjures the image of a flamenco dancer flipping her skirt to the music. Additionally, the polka dot pattern has been a common pattern for Flamenco dance dresses.¹⁹² Cashin incorporated ethnic dress ideas into her garments to express global citizenship and what she felt was a new age of sharing information globally through media and travel. As Iverson said, “the aims of Cashin’s adaptations...were allusions and effects that reflected enthusiasm for modern life in a global culture.”¹⁹³

The note “pheasant” on the sketch likely refers to the color of leather she wanted as the binding. It is unlikely she is referring to the swatch since applying it to the sketch is all the information the sewer would need. The color of leather on the TCM cape matches that used on the TCM poncho, the color of which was also called “pheasant.” This reuse of color in a different collection is another example of her philosophy to avoid obsolescence in fashion since maintaining colors means customers’ older garments will match new ones.

Summary of Object Analysis

As a result of this research, we now know more about these particular artifacts and can begin to use them to understand more about Cashin’s design process and how she realized her philosophy through specific garment concepts. It is apparent from the TCM photograph of the Tin Lizzie that the coat was used in a runway show and was likely retailed without the skirt. Publicity photos in the Cashin Collection at the Young Research Library are further evidence that the coat was retailed without the skirt. Collection essays are evidence that Cashin designed with active women in mind, and this coat is an example of functional clothing for activity because it was designed for women drivers. She further acknowledges that mid-twentieth century women lead more active lives than their predecessors by juxtaposing references to the early twentieth century

191. Papenbrock, "History of Flamenco."

192. Ibid.; and Serrano and Elgorriaga, *Flamenco, Body and Soul: An Aficionado's Introduction*.

193. Iverson, "'Early' Bonnie Cashin," 119.

duster with sturdy suede and practical pockets that suit mid-twentieth century women. The kimono sleeves facilitated movement and allowed for the coat to fold flat for easy stowing during travel. The sleeves are an example of the ethnic influences, in this case Japanese, that Cashin drew from to create functional clothing with minimal seaming.

Designer sketches in the Cashin Collection at the Young Research Library with the title “Half and Half” as well as a news article in the Cashin file at the Fashion Institute of Technology are evidence that Cashin used the name “Half and Half” to refer to her clothing designs that included leather and fabric like the TCM Half and Half coatdress. The TCM Half and Half coatdress itself is an example of the dyed-to-match leather and fabric combinations Cashin used.

The TCM poncho, sketch, and publicity photo were connected sequentially by and to a designer sketch and publicity photos from the Cashin Collection at the Young Research Library. We can now see the evolution of the design process: from sketch to model garment, back to sketch and second model garment, and finally to publicity and production. The sketch of the longer poncho from the Young Research Library also shows wholesale and retail pricing for both the longer poncho and pants so we know about what Cashin’s and Sills’ mark-up was for that season.

The tweed suit shows how Cashin used simple styling to keep her garment designs classic as opposed to trendy. The simple classic look of the jacket accentuates the bold tweed and the brass toggles, the types of fabric and closure she enjoyed and for which she became well known.

The Flamenco cape reveals her interest in travel. The cape folds flat so that it can be packed easily, it is long and unstructured so that it can serve a dual purpose as a blanket on a plane or train, and its full-circle cut with flowing polka-dots allude to the Flamenco dresses of Southern Spain. She reflected the world in her clothing by borrowing from the dress of different cultures and to represent the communication of ideas across cultures.

As a group these garments and ensembles reveal aspects of Cashin’s work. All five artifacts show how truly large her pockets were, often eight by ten inches, the character of her simple clean-lined construction that set-off the range of material for which she was most well known, leather, suede, and tweed. The sketches demonstrate her ideas for the garments as part of a wardrobe by listing and illustrating layering pieces and

accessories. The collection essays couch the garments in Cashin's wardrobe concept by introducing them as parts that work together. Essays also link the garments to nature by listing color names that are flora and fauna, describing activities, and titling her collections with themes that evoke the outdoors and active lifestyles. Overall, this object analysis reveals Cashin's consistency in working her philosophy into clothing designs and in presenting them for a particular lifestyle.

Using Prown's Model

I conclude this chapter with my experience using Prown's model. As mentioned in Chapter Three, I had some trouble at first defining the boundaries between the sections of description, deduction, and speculation. When I better segregated these steps and followed the sequence as recommended by Prown, I started to better understand how to use the descriptions of the garments to speculate on their meanings. Speculation was the most difficult step. I felt wary about assuming too much, but as I began to support my ideas with the archival and historic research and as I became more familiar with Cashin's body of work, comfort with my proposals increased. Valerie Steele discusses Prown's material culture method specifically for studying clothing. She wrote, "One of the hardest things to judge is how much detail to include in one's description, since skimpy description provides too little information to work with, but too much detail (such as endless measurements) causes a loss of focus on the object as a whole."¹⁹⁴ I agree that this was difficult as I reorganized my descriptions on two different occasions, once to remove any deductive, non-descriptive, information and a second time to remove many measurements and provide a better summary of the object. Steele advocates the use of this model as a tool to move beyond description to explanation, to get at the meanings behind the clothing.¹⁹⁵ In this paper meanings are sought by comparing the artifacts to Cashin's sketches, her writing about her designs, and to publicity material and advertising of her clothing.

194. Steele, "A Museum of Fashion is More Than a Clothes-Bag," 329.

195. Ibid., 332.



Figure 4-1 Tin Lizzie coat and knit skirt, Textiles and Clothing Museum, Iowa State University, 1981.1.3, photo by M. J. Bute.



Figure 4-2 Sleeve seam, photo by M. J. Bute.

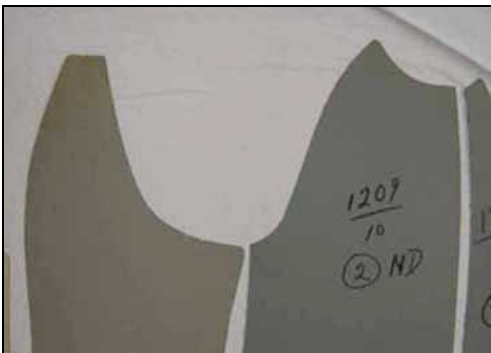


Figure 4-3 Pattern block of front left and sleeve, photo by M. J. Bute.



Figure 4-4 Buckle at collar, photo by M. J. Bute.



Figure 4-5 Topstitching on sleeve, photo by M. J. Bute.



Figure 4-6 Exterior pocket, photo by M. J. Bute.



Figure 4-7 Interior purse pocket, photo by M. J. Bute.



Figure 4-8 Label in Tin Lizzie, photo by M. J. Bute.



Figure 4-9 Tin Lizzie runway photo, Cashin file, Textiles and Clothing Museum, Iowa State University, 1981.1.33.



Figure 4-10 Tin Lizzie publicity photo, Bonnie Cashin Collection (collection no. 440). Department of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA, 275.2.6.



Figure 4-11 Tin Lizzie publicity photo, Bonnie Cashin Collection (collection no. 440). Department of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA, 275.4.9.



Figure 4-12 Advertisement for suede and raccoon coat by Style Trends; Vogue, October 15, 1963.



Figure 4-13 Half and Half coatdress, Textiles and Clothing Museum, Iowa State University, 1981.1.4, photo by M. J. Bute.



Figure 4-14 Chipped button, photo by M. J. Bute.



Figure 4-15 Support button, photo by M. J. Bute.



Figure 4-16 Detail of fabric on Half and Half, photo by M. J. Bute.

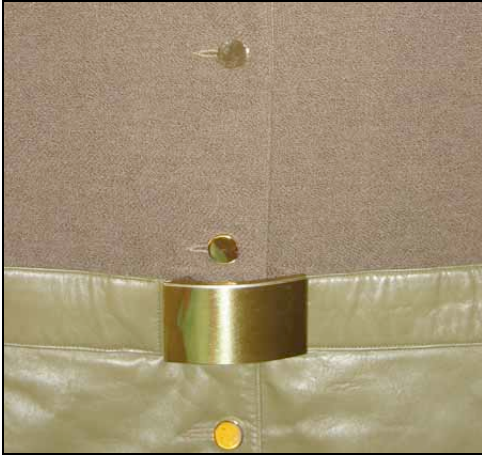


Figure 4-17 Belt buckle, photo by M. J. Bute.



Figure 4-18 Reverse of belt buckle, photo by M. J. Bute.



Figure 4-19 Topstitched pocket, photo by M. J. Bute.



Figure 4-20 Label in Half and Half, photo by M. J. Bute.



Figure 4-21 Sketch of Half and Half Sills and Co. #2441, Cashin file, Textiles and Clothing Museum, Iowa State University, 1981.1.25.



Figure 4-22 Sketch of another "Half and Half" coatdress Sills and Co. #4406, Bonnie Cashin Collection (collection no. 440). Department of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research, Library, UCLA, box 92, folder 4.

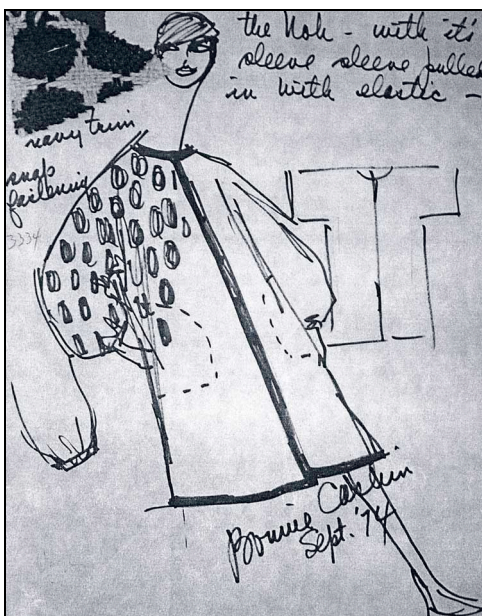


Figure 4-23 Sketch of a Noh coat with elastic cuffs and pattern outlined on right Sills and Co. #3334, Bonnie Cashin Collection (collection no. 440). Department of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA, box 103, folder 5.



Figure 4-24 Poncho and pants, Textiles and Clothing Museum, Iowa State University, 1981.1.9a-c, photo by M. J. Bute.



Figure 4-25 Detail of fabric of pants, photo by M. J. Bute.



Figure 4-26 Reverse of poncho and pants, photo by M. J. Bute.



Figure 4-27 Waistband of pants, photo by M. J. Bute.

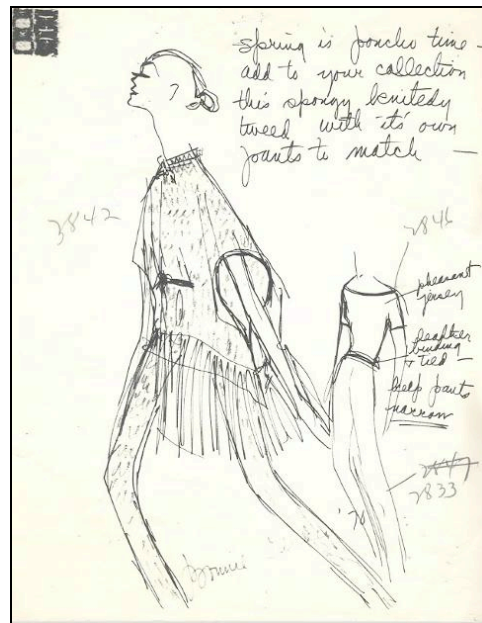


Figure 4-28 Sketch of poncho and pants Sills and Co. #3842 and #2833, Cashin file, Textiles and Clothing Museum, Iowa State University, 1981.1.29.

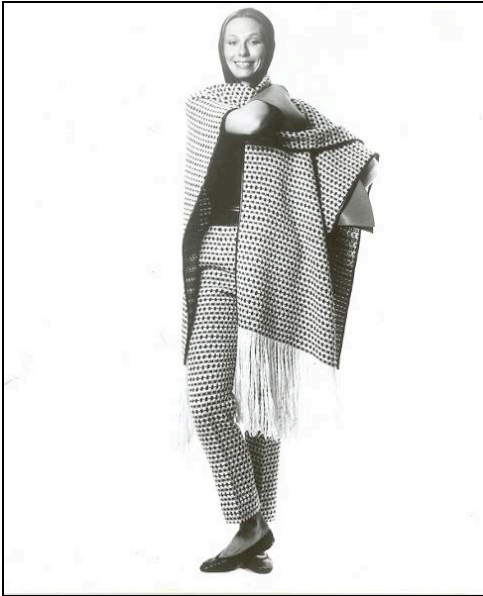


Figure 2-29 Publicity photo of poncho and pants, Cashin file, Textiles and Clothing Museum, Iowa State University, 1981.1.35.

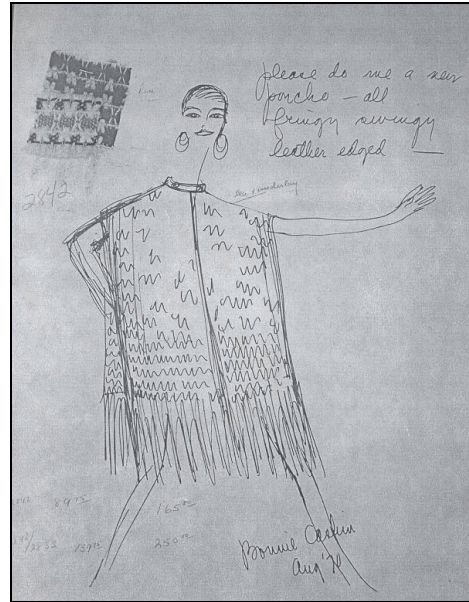


Figure 4-30 Sketch of poncho Sills and Co. #2842, Bonnie Cashin Collection (collection no. 440). Department of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA, box 101, folder 3.



Figure 4-31 Tweed suit, Textiles and Clothing Museum, Iowa State University, 1981.1.10a-b, photo by M. J. Bute.



Figure 4-32 Detail of fabric of suit, photo by M. J. Bute.



Figure 4-33 Sleeve pocket, photo by M. J. Bute.



Figure 4-34 Jacket pocket, inside, photo by M. J. Bute.



Figure 4-35 Label in suit, photo by M. J. Bute.



Figure 4-36 Sketch of suit Sills and Co. #3215 and #2792, Cashin file, Textiles and Clothing Museum, Iowa State University, 1981.1.30.



Figure 4-37 Flamenco cape, Textiles and Clothing Museum, Iowa State University, 1981.1.13, photo by M. J. Bute.



Figure 4-38 Collar, photo by M. J. Bute.



Figure 4-39 Label in cape, photo by M. J. Bute.



Figure 4-40 Buckle, photo by M. J. Bute.



Figure 4-41 Sills tag on cape, photo by M. J. Bute.



Figure 4-42 Sills tag on cape, reverse side, photo by M. J. Bute.



Figure 4-43 Cape shown flat, photo by M. J. Bute.



Figure 4-44 Cape pocket, photo by M. J. Bute.



Figure 4-45 Cape pocket with white glove,
photo by M. J. Bute.



Figure 4-46 Sketch of cape Sills and Co.
#3317, Cashin file, Textiles and Clothing
Museum, Iowa State University, 1981.1.32.

Chapter 5: Interpretation of Artifacts

In this chapter, I discuss three themes that address my research goals of connecting the artifacts analyzed to Bonnie Cashin's design process and philosophy, determining how Cashin's designs were marketed by connecting the artifacts to marketing materials, and discovering whether or not the model garments in the TCM are representative of garments sold to the public. The three themes I present are: 1) details of the artifacts which are characteristic of Cashin's work for Sills and Co., 2) Cashin's design philosophy as reflected in the artifacts I studied, and 3) the marketing of Cashin's garments.

I developed these themes to focus on the garments I studied and keep my results grounded in the collection but also to extend the understanding of the Cashin collection itself. Details are presented first; the theme of details is based on what exists in the five garments studied. Beginning with this theme grounded the interpretation in the collection. Cashin's philosophy is linked to the details, and from there I expanded the interpretation into Cashin's larger body of work. The themes of details and design philosophy lay the foundation for the theme of the marketing of her clothing. Interpreting the marketing of her clothing provides an understanding of Cashin as a businesswoman. The details of her designs are physical representations of her philosophy, which in turn are the foundation of her public image and her brand.

One of the purposes of my thesis is to broaden the understanding of the TCM collection. The TCM maintains the collection to help teach students the history of clothing and fashion, the history of garment production, and the history of design and designers. With that in mind in this chapter I also suggest ways to augment the Cashin holdings in order to present a more complete picture of the designer and her look.

Details Characteristic of Bonnie Cashin's Work for Sills and Co.

It is through details that the "Cashin look" is defined, best stated by Cashin in a collection essay, "the look is identifiable."¹⁹⁶ Many of the details of the garments described in Chapter Four are characteristic of Cashin's work. The four key details represented in the five garments and discussed within this theme are trim, closures, pockets, and texture.

196. Cashin and Sills, "Fall Opening May 3, 1973" (collection essay), 2.

Trim

Trim is part of the poncho and pants, suit, and cape. Leather or suede binds the edges of nearly all of Cashin's designs for Sills that were not made entirely from leather or suede. An exception would be the Half and Half coatdress and similar styles which incorporated leather as large sections of the garment. Cashin's first few collections for Sills and Co. were entirely leather and suede.¹⁹⁷ She soon branched out and incorporated tweed, canvas, cashmere, wool jersey, and her other favorites, but always with leather or suede trim. Sills was first and foremost a leather manufacturer, but agreed to produce her work in other materials if it included leather or suede, hence the trims.¹⁹⁸ Cashin called these leather and suede trims, "outlings," "tracings," or "the frame that holds them all together...the leatherings."¹⁹⁹ They were nearly always dyed to match the fabric color, or one of the colors in multi-colored fabrics. About her fall 1973 collection *Women's Wear Daily* reported, "she sticks to her classic details that include leather and suede trimming."²⁰⁰ These trims are seen on the inside as well; "the interiors [were] 'cleaned' with leather pipings and designed as carefully as the exteriors."²⁰¹ The suit and cape are examples of suede and leather binding on inside seams.

The bindings take the place of facings on the heavy tweeds Cashin enjoyed using. By eliminating the need for facing, she reduced bulk and stiffness in the garment. This allowed the fabric to drape as it did when she unwound it from the bolt, before it became a garment. Therefore the leather trim contributes to Cashin's design philosophy in her reverence for the fabric and her development of garment shapes that required minimal cutting of handwoven fabrics for construction. The use of the leather trim lets her garments simply characterize the fabric as it was woven. The Flamenco cape is a perfect example; with no added bulk at the opening or hem it drapes like a blanket. The lack of facing also contributed to the wearability of her layered ensembles because without extra bulk, additional layers were easy to don and did not hinder movement. In fact, her interest in layers began because of the practical aspect of ease of movement accommodated by many thin garments versus one thick coat. Cashin's trims also enhanced the functionality

197. Wilson, "Bonnie Cashin's Inspiration."

198. Ibid.

199. Cashin and Sills, "Fall Opening May 6, 1976" (collection essay), 2.

200. *Women's Wear Daily*, "Now: Fall in New York: Bonnie Cashin," May 4, 1973.

201. Cashin and Sills, "Spring Opening Nov. 4, 1971" (collection essay), 4.

of her clothing for travel and active movement. Since these trims facilitated layering, the wearer can easily adapt to a change in weather. Her trims also made folding and packing easier because they replaced bulky facing. All of these factors are important design elements that allowed Cashin to realize her design philosophy and create a recognizable brand image.

Closures

Cashin often finished her collection essays with a list of details; the variety of closures was nearly always included. For example in 1977 she notes, “details to watch for are...the way with closures, the battening-down with the ubiquitous turn-screw, the wrapping-in with leather strings, the thong ties, the snaps, the buckled tabs, and the almost absence of buttons per se.”²⁰² Closures, particularly hardware closures like the brass toggle and dog-leash clasp, have become Cashin icons. She stated herself, “the almost total elimination of buttons is a signature.”²⁰³ The buckles on the Tin Lizzie and the cape, the brass rectangle belt buckle on the Half and Half, the brass toggles on the poncho and suit, and the thin leather ties on the poncho and pants are perfect examples of the non-traditional closures she liked. In 1973 she wrote, the fabrics were “all collage-d together by thongings [and] hardware battenings of metal.”²⁰⁴ She liked the tactile qualities of these closures as much as the fabrics in which she designed her garments. They were functional in a very visible way that helped make them not only one of her signatures but one of the key elements that set her apart from other contemporary American designers. That visibility meant the hardware closures were an important element of her design philosophy. They became part of her brand image and a symbol of not only the casual outdoor-life appeal of her designs but their comfort and ease of use in such a setting.

Pockets

Large pockets, sometimes called “pocketings” by Cashin in collection essays, are another identifier of Cashin’s coats and other outerwear. The large size is part of their functionality; an essential aspect of both Cashin’s pockets and her philosophy of design.

202. Cashin and Sills, "Fall Opening April 21, 1977" (collection essay), 5.

203. Cashin and Sills, "Spring Opening Nov. 7, 1975" (collection essay), 2.

204. Cashin and Sills, "Fall Opening May 3, 1973" (collection essay), 2.

The pockets of the Tin Lizzie, a car coat, were placed so that the wearer could access them while seated, and the interior purse pocket latched closed to secure things when the coat was tossed over a chair, for example. The pockets of the Half and Half and the suit were topstitched and traced so that they became a design feature. There are no pockets in the poncho, but there are larger than average in-seam pockets in the matching pants. In the suit, the pockets on the upper sleeves show a playful usage of pockets as a decorative design element. Pockets were strategically hidden inside the cape. Under “The Looks” section in a collection essay Cashin heeded, “watch for the various pocketings, carved, bellowed, hung, pursed.”²⁰⁵

Creating functional clothing for women who lead active lives was at the center of Cashin’s design philosophy. Pockets contributed much of the functionality Cashin sought because they allowed women to leave their purses at home while carrying what they needed and yet live their lives with their hands free. The functionality of her pockets was reviewed in Chapter Four, but her pockets were not only functional they were a symbol of women’s liberation. In the mid-twentieth century women in America were pursuing more activities outside their homes. More women were working, and everyone was traveling more and further from home and adopting an increasingly casual life that included sports and other outdoor activities. Large pockets gave women the flexibility to choose when to carry a purse or bag and when to have their hands free. Pockets became an important part of Cashin’s designs, especially outerwear, and hence an important part of her brand image. For example, understood from this perspective, pockets as part of her brand image may explain the addition of the sleeve pockets in the ISU suit jacket, a change from the original sketch of the ensemble. These could have been added as a way of “labeling” the jacket with a very visible Bonnie Cashin brand.

Textures

“Textures” was frequently a section in collection essays. She described the fabrics featured in her collections as “pure wool tweedy-weedy spongy textures...lush mohair blanket coatings...tough country tweeds”²⁰⁶ and “smooth buttery kidskins, soft velvety suedes, [and] spongy tactile tweeds.”²⁰⁷ Her wish to spin a bird’s nest and a

205. Cashin and Sills, "Spring Opening Nov. 7, 1975" (collection essay), 3.

206. Cashin and Sills, "Fall Opening May 6, 1976" (collection essay), 3.

207. Cashin and Sills, "Spring 1971 Opening Nov. 12, 1970" (collection essay), 2.

spider's web into a tweed²⁰⁸ portrays the tactile character she relished as well as the intensity of her enjoyment of texture. The Tin Lizzie is buttery suede, the Half and Half contrasts the nubby bouclé with slick leather, the poncho and pants and the suit are "weedy tweeds," and the loose weave of the cape bestows the garment with a soft hand and fluid drape.

The variety of textures Cashin chose were inspired by nature and evoked the sense of country that was part of her brand image. These were also heavy and rough-textured fabrics that evoked how they were made and symbolized their closeness to nature. Suede and leather were obvious choices to show the country aesthetic because of their use in traditional country work clothes and western wear. Cashin's use of "weedy tweeds" also captured this aesthetic because their thick wooliness and large scale weaves resembled textures of bark and grass or even saddle blankets.

Cashin played with words when she wrote about these four key details highlighting their prominence in her designs. Phrases like "big pocketed, battened with hardware, buckles and zippers,"²⁰⁹ "snapping into' with grippers, or 'wrap and tie' with leather thongs,"²¹⁰ and her playful descriptions of textures celebrate the forms they describe. Her writing in collection essays makes it clear that she understood the distinctiveness of her look. For example in 1972 she wrote, "No need to mention that the tracings of leathers on all the textures are the indelible signature of all these clothes, with or without a label."²¹¹ It is as though Cashin reveled in the descriptions as much as the details themselves. It was certainly her own enjoyment of them that kept them in so many of her collections.

Morris wrote, "you don't need a score-card to tell a Cashin. [In this collection t]here are all the ideas she's worked on for years, never throwing them out because the calendar marks a new season: the dressing-in-layers plan, the emphasis on tweed, jersey, canvas and leather, the functional but decorative hardware closings."²¹² All of the other details from the TCM pieces I have pointed out here could be included in that statement. The details of these garments are exemplary of Cashin's work because she continued

208. Lake, "Main Page."

209. Cashin and Sills, "Fall Opening May 1, 1975" (collection essay), 3.

210. Cashin and Sills, "Spring Opening Nov. 7, 1975" (collection essay), 2.

211. Cashin and Sills, "Spring Opening Nov. 2, 1972" (collection essay), 3.

212. Morris, "To Bonnie Cashin, Obsolescence in Fashion is Obsolete."

these details in her collections for decades. As I have shown, the TCM collection is evidence of her use of trim, her unique closures, large pockets, and textured materials, and these details are in turn visual evidence of Cashin's design philosophy and contributed to her brand image.

Bonnie Cashin's Philosophy as Reflected in her Work

Bonnie Cashin worked within a framework she developed based on her own philosophy about the purpose of clothing—that it should be practical and reflect modern culture. Throughout her career, she expressed strong ideas about the practicality of clothing. As printed in the *New York Post* in 1974,

One of America's few originals, Bonnie sees fashion as 'more an environment for the body ...[sic] functional, enduring, uncommon...' Rarely do any designer's intellectual concepts come to life so faithfully—again thanks to Sills.²¹³

Her philosophy was centered on creating a wardrobe that met the needs of women like herself who traveled, led active lives, and spent time in both the city and the country. The three key elements of the philosophy, presented here within the second theme, are a woman's wardrobe, movement and simplicity of her garments, and how they were created for women on the go. By relating Cashin's idea of a woman's wardrobe and how she envisioned a woman on the go, I show how aspects of her work represented in the artifacts I studied were informed by her philosophy.

A Woman's Wardrobe

Bonnie Cashin designed her collections to work together as a total wardrobe of classic, modular, and casual ready-to-wear separates, pieces to layer and mix-and-match and wear for several years without regard for which season or year they were produced. She did not design her clothing to mimic trends. She wanted women to be able to develop a wearable collection of clothing over the years so she wanted to keep her look classic and "seasonless." She told *Women's Wear Daily*, "the word 'fashion' is old fashion"²¹⁴ and wrote in several collection essays that obsolescence of fashion should be obsolete.²¹⁵

213. Preston, "The Modern Heirloom."

214. Klensch, "Bonnie Cashin Hates to Use the Word 'New.'"

215. For example: Cashin and Sills, "Fall Opening May 3, 1973" (collection essay); and Cashin and Sills, "Spring Opening Nov. 6, 1974" (collection essay).

She designed with coordinating textures, colors, and shapes to allow for limitless combinations and layering options. In the last paragraph of several collection essays she and Sills implored buyers to use the entire range of colors, lengths, and garments they presented and not narrow the scope. She felt the customer was neglected when the range of choices was limited. She wanted each woman to create her own unique wardrobe from among the pieces in her collection and by adding to pieces they already owned. In one collection essay she repined, “alas, the layerings aren’t always allowed to stay together in spite of praying together!”²¹⁶

Cashin began her concept of layered dressing after a trip to China in 1951.²¹⁷ Cashin is often cited as the designer who brought layered dressing west or introduced layering to fashion. She described the “Layer Theory” as perfect for travel and “deep freeze” conditions. She wrote in a collection essay,

Perfect weather control, this system. There are several variants to choose from all beginning with jersey and finished off with a coat varying from unlined tweed to fur-lined leather. In between insulation is a sleeveless “shell” jacket, or a “bib” chest protector or a sweater-coat. Each part is designed to look handsome on its own so the variety is infinite. As the Chinese say, ‘It’s a Seven-sha’am day’ (cold cold) or a two-sha’am day... ‘A sha’am is a long flannel shirt worn beneath a padded gown—as the temperature dropped in winter, the Chinese put on extra sha’ams. They rated the weather according to the total number of sha’ams they wore. — Sha’ams calibrated the Chinese thermometer.’²¹⁸

Her essays suggested combinations of the clothing she presented each season, always with the comment that there was an infinite variety of combinations. Her system of layering was about having several garments that worked together and changing only a few pieces each season as new colors were introduced. Essays asserted that the more expensive sweaters, coats, mantles, and other pieces such as the knitted jersey garments made from expensive cashmere, wool, or silk were “investments”²¹⁹ since they were versatile and “seasonless.”²²⁰ News articles mention that her clothes become “old

216. Cashin and Sills, "Spring Opening Nov. 6, 1974" (collection essay), 0.

217. Iverson, "Main Page."

218. Cashin and Sills, "Fall-Winter 1961" (collection essay), 4.

219. For example: Cashin and Sills, "Fall-Winter 1961" (collection essay).

220. Cashin and Sills, "Spring Opening Nov. 4, 1971" (collection essay), 2.

friends”²²¹ because they can be worn year after year. In the *New York Times* Morris instructed readers how to layer:

The first layer of almost every outfit is a cashmere sweater, as often as not in dress length. It acts as a slip when a short, swingy skirt is added, [Cashin] explains. A suede or smooth leather vest can also be added, then a jacket. If more warmth is needed there are any number of capes, wide enough for an end to be thrown over one shoulder. The final layer could also be a pile-lined canvas coat that descends almost to the ankles. The lower third is attached by metal fastenings and can be removed to form maybe a stole or a lap robe.²²²

The five Sills and Co. artifacts studied could each be a part of this wardrobe system. Unfortunately, this system as a whole is not well represented among the pieces in the TCM. The skirt with the Tin Lizzie and perhaps the poncho and pants come close. This skirt is the type of garment that would be a first layer, unlined jersey trimmed in suede. Other candidates for a first layer in the TCM, that I did not study, are the striped wool jersey long johns trimmed in leather²²³ or the wool jersey bloomer jumpsuit.²²⁴ But nothing in the collection represents the complete Cashin look in one ensemble. All the garments studied would need a long sleeved cashmere or merino jersey top trimmed in matching suede or leather. She designed short ones as well as long ones that could be worn as a dress or slip under a skirt. The most Cashin-esque had a hood or a funnel or boat neck. Bottom first layers for the Tin Lizzie, Half and Half, or Flamenco cape would be knit pants or skirts of varying lengths. Some of her short pants were tight, like jerkins, others were bloomers. Bottom second layers might be these items in leather, suede, tweed, or canvas. When she introduced the parabola skirt, shorter in front and longer in back, she frequently showed it over leggings or long johns like the TCM pair.

In order to more fully convey the Cashin look, I recommend the TCM acquire some of these other layers, especially the knit tops. This would help illustrate for students Cashin’s “layer theory” and help present the ideas of a modular/separates wardrobe that gained so much popularity in the mid-twentieth century as one of the innovations in American fashion design.

221. Morris, "Cashin—The Fun Goes On."

222. Morris, "Fashion Catches Up to Cashin."

223. TCM object 1981.1.7

224. TCM object 1984.1.1

Movement and Simplicity

Movement and simplicity were other important philosophic aspects of her clothing designs. Cashin's first job was designing dance costumes. These clothes had to look good in motion and facilitate movement of the body wearing the garment. Movement remained a primary concern when she began designing ready-to-wear, she lead an active life and therefore demanded her clothing accommodate daily activity. She designed purposefully for "women on the go" and responded to the needs of "modern living." Activities accommodated by her clothing were, as listed in collection essays, bicycling, catching a taxi, country hikes, and of course traveling.²²⁵ Cashin advocated short garments, like the Tin Lizzie, the Half and Half coatdress, or the suit for daily city life that required catching taxis, riding the subway, or climbing stairs. The long Flamenco cape would have been better suited to a country walk or for travel when it could double as a blanket.

Aligned with articulating movement, Cashin had a reverence for fabric, which could be seen as one of the influences behind her simple design shapes. Her favored fabrics, heavy textured wool tweeds, leather, and suede, for example, were bulky and a challenge to shape into heavily-constructed garments. She avoided darts and used a minimum of seams. As stated in a collection essay from 1962, "Miss Cashin never 'tortures' a fabric into unnatural forms. She says she 'just lets it act naturally.'"²²⁶ Since her clothing was not molded tightly to the curves of the body, it was loose, geometrically shaped, and accommodated movement. Loose and unfitted are characteristic of the five garments I studied. For example the Tin Lizzie, the Half and Half, and the suit skirt are an A-line or trapezoid shape, the suit jacket and poncho are boxy rectangles, and the cape is a large circle.

Sleeve details and wrap-able garments are also action-oriented characteristics of the five garments I studied. Raglan sleeves, such as those of the Tin Lizzie, allow for more arm movement than set-in sleeves. The all-in-one sleeves of the Half and Half provide ample room for movement within an otherwise heavy, almost stiff fabric. The poncho, Cashin claimed, was the perfect flat form. The orange suit is relatively simple,

225. For example: Cashin and Sills, "Fall-Winter 1961" (collection essay); and Cashin and Sills, "Spring Opening Nov. 1, 1973" (collection essay).

226. Cashin and Sills, "Fall-Winter 1962-'63 Press Preview May 23rd-Opening May 24th, 1962" (collection essay), 2.

but the sleeve pockets are curious considering their seeming lack of functionality. Like the poncho, the cape form was a common Cashin wrap. On all these the mere tracing of leather means the edge could be finished without using a lining or bulky facing. Many of her outerwear forms served double duty; her ponchos, mantles, and capes folded flat to be used as lap blankets at stadiums and for car rides and packed easily for travel.

Woman on the Go

Cashin designed clothing for women living the life she lived herself. In fact, she designed for herself and wore only her own garments. Riley wrote for the 1962 Cashin Retrospective, “Her egotistic drive [gave] a special and personal look to her clothes—one which [was] not to be superimposed on every woman.”²²⁷ She was compelled to design clothing based on need. As she put it, “The starting point of my design thinking is inspired by today’s activities.”²²⁸ Her clothes packed flat for travel and had pockets to keep wearers hands free from holding a purse. Her layering system allowed for instantaneous changes in clothing as activities or weather changed. To her, clothing needed to respond to the environment and be part of modern life in the second half of the twentieth century. She “consider[ed] her wardrobe an enriching adjunct to total living”²²⁹ News articles agreed: “Today, with the sophisticated Paris designers endorsing the easy outdoors look, Miss Cashin’s clothes seem more in tune than ever with the times in which we live.”²³⁰

All five of the TCM garments fold flat to fit in a suitcase. They all have pockets large enough to potentially eliminate the need for a purse or they have purses built in. The Tin Lizzie was designed for “*modern motorists*.” Women were now doing the driving and this coat in durable suede was specially suited to that activity. The Flamenco cape became the perfect travel blanket when needed, with pockets to keep a paperback or travel guide within easy reach. Cashin also designed clothing specifically befitted for the country. Rugged tweeds, leather, and suede cut into shapes you could hike in, with pockets for your gear. The Half and Half could have gone on a chilly country walk, wrapped over a wool jersey top and pants.

227. Riley, “Bonnie Cashin Retrospective,” 101.

228. Cashin and Sills, “Fall-Winter 1961,” (collection essay), 7.

229. Cashin and Sills, “Spring Opening Nov. 4, 1971,” (collection essay), 0.

230. Thomas, “Bonnie Cashin is Noted for Easy Casual Clothes.”

The Marketing of Bonnie Cashin's Work

When Cashin returned to New York from Hollywood, in 1951, she did so to once again design ready-to-wear. She first returned to Adler and Adler but stayed there less than a year before creating Bonnie Cashin Designs Inc. in 1951.²³¹ Her motivation to freelance was to find a way to design *all* of the garments and accessories necessary to outfit a woman for modern life. She felt constricted working for a manufacturer because she was unable to produce the range and variety of clothing she desired. One way she accomplished this was by designing for many different manufacturers. Another path, possibly serendipitous, was through Sills who allowed her to use any material as long as either leather or suede were included.²³² With Sills she created all the layers of her system. They sold knit components, tweed suits, and a wide variety of outerwear; however, collection essays reveal they had little control over how each collection was merchandised once it left the showroom no matter how hard they tried to control this:

Because of past experience, we ask you to keep color and fabric combinations, when ordering, within the large selection our designer has established. If there is a strong reason for any deviation from this, such as a special promotion, we will be happy to discuss it with you. But please do not otherwise ask us to change combinations.²³³

Cashin's designs were largely very original and unique in the market, but many copies of her clothing existed. One year after Cashin's Tin Lizzie coat was produced a near identical coat appeared in *Vogue*. The same silhouette, buckles, waist seam pockets, and vertical darts appear to have been copied (Figure 5-1). Cashin and Sills took a stand to "work with conscientious stores to try to alleviate the unauthorized copying problem,"²³⁴ who would not source cheaper look-a-likes or provide material for copying. Cashin was outspoken on a number of fashion-industry issues and spoke some about the issue of copies, but mainly focused on other aspects of the business which troubled her.²³⁵

231. Lake, "Timeline." I have referred to her work from that time forward as freelance, but I don't know what her particular business arrangements were with any of the manufactures for whom she designed.

232. Wilson, "Bonnie Cashin's Inspiration," 20.

233. Cashin and Sills, "Fall-Winter 1964-65" (collection essay), 12.

234. Cashin and Sills, "Fall-Winter 1964-5 Press Showing May 14-Opening May 18" (collection essay), 0.

235. Some of these topics were 1) planned obsolescence in fashion, she preferred to design classic garments that look fashionable for years; 2) innovation and originality, which she felt the industry lacked; and 3) profit making versus artistic creation, a critical conflict of interest she felt slowed down innovation.

Rather than incorporate the copying problem into her rhetoric to spark change, she protected the brand by firmly adhering to top quality materials, construction, and design details and stayed vigilant in her choice of retailers. She also never licensed her name or brand or employed “in-house” designers who might contribute to diluting her philosophy.

Adhering to top quality was also a way they justified their increasing prices. As the cost of top quality hides and cashmere increased so must their price to the retailers and customers. They did attempt, initially, to combat rising costs. Sills stated in 1964,

Here at Sills we have attempted to absorb this increased cost in the hope of maintaining our retail price lines. It is our desire to have our level of taste attainable to as many women as agree with it. We feel that good taste and fashion sense are not to be confused with one's ability to buy overly costly clothing.²³⁶

Later, they defined the high priced leathers, suedes, and cashmeres as investments. Her wardrobe and layering philosophy also came into play in this idea of clothing as investment; as the price of cashmere increased Cashin talked about the value of her “seasonless” clothing.

One of my goals was to determine to what extent Cashin was able to imbue advertising of her clothing with her personality and design philosophy. I had hoped to find tear sheets of her work in ads from fashion and women's magazines in the Bonnie Cashin Collection at the Young Research Library but did not. Instead, I found, among all the archives I searched, newspaper advertisements and articles about her and her collections in fashion and apparel industry print sources as well as popular press sources. I did find a few photo spreads in *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar* magazines from the 60s and 70s.

Cashin realized her philosophy and her clothing designs were somewhat unconventional in the context of twentieth century American fashion, especially early in her career. Cashin often spoke to the press about her design philosophy, and conveyed it in her collection essays that were handed out to the press and to buyers. Through buyers, she hoped her attitudes about the functionality and particular uses of her clothing would be depicted in retail settings. She addressed the uniqueness of her designs in a collection essay in 1961:

²³⁶. Cashin and Sills, "Fall-Winter 1964-5 Press Showing May 14-Opening May 18" (collection essay), 0.

These clothes are not meant to be all things to all women. Altho [sic] the pattern is one of comfort and of great simplicity, an imaginative quality comes thru, quite non-conformist. Care must be taken to combine the right design with the right body – and the right time and place. Salespeople take care!²³⁷

Newspaper reports about her and about her work related her philosophy directly to the public. Two key methods were seen that allowed Cashin more direct control of the brand and gave consumers a more direct look at her work the way she wanted it shown. First, her sketches were used in advertising and in newspaper articles about her work as well as enlarged for buyers in runway shows. Second, Cashin wore her own designs and was photographed in them. *W* printed an article with a photo of Cashin in one of her capes and included a sketch with notes about how and why to layer (Figure 5-2) as well as a list of her own considerations showing what she took into account when designing garments:

Keep in mind

- 1) fabric costs-don't skimp on quality-just don't use as much
- 2) labor costs-simplicity-better design
- 3) the thinking consumer-there's a lot of her (don't be an ostrich!)
- 4) environmental problems
- 5) value (how useful is it?)
- 6) reaching limitations (as the mother of you know what)²³⁸

In number three of this list, Cashin was saying that there were many women, like herself, who wanted what she designed, despite manufacturers and buyers who thought her designs would not sell, or who thought all American women were mindless followers of the dictates of fashion. "Don't be an ostrich!" means: look around and see what real women are doing and wearing; don't hide your head in the sand like an ostrich. By displaying her own images and words she was able to exert control over public perception of her brand.

Cashin used publicity photos for Sills and Co. advertisements to tell the story of the woman meant to wear her clothing. She directed photo shoots and instructed models to "move, smile, and 'act the part' of the free-spirited confident woman in her

237. Cashin and Sills, "Fall-Winter 1961" (collection essay), 3.

238. Froio, "Bonnie Cashin on Fashion."

unconventional clothes.”²³⁹ The advertisement in figure 5-3 shows just such a woman and includes a quote from Cashin, “My bloomers are for anyone that lives in the country, but they’ll probably come to town like all my clothes. Although the style is ageless, the women with a little figure and a lithe walk will look the best.” Her control over public perception was not complete however; many retailers ran their own advertisements with their own sketches and photos of women not acting the part so energetically. Figure 5-5 is an advertisement from a *Harper’s Bazaar* in 1968. The drawing shows a young woman at the airport, ready for an international excursion with her poodle; but her quiet unsmiling look and somewhat static pose are the opposite of Cashin’s independent free spirit shown in other ads, especially those she directed. Finally, the character’s “big hair,” in the ad in figure 5-5, was never part of Cashin’s look which featured the tight hoods, a look she once described as, “almost no hair.”²⁴⁰

In order to explore the marketing process in more detail, I looked specifically at the Flamenco cape. From the sketch of the cape (Figure 4-46) we know she called the blue color of the leather and the navy-blue wool “pheasant.” Many of her colors were named after birds or other animals. She was known for her striking color combinations. By giving them such names she linked them to nature and enhanced the natural country feel of many of her fabrics. While the geometric, almost op-art, pattern of the cape may not speak to that country feel, the texture does. The expanse of fabric and wide, soft loosely woven yarns of the cape are like a blanket at a rustic lodge. The leather binding added to this idea since it allows the cape to be unstructured and blanket like. She often used a theme related to nature as a format to introduce her collections. In the collection essay for fall 1975, the date of the cape, she presented three themes: “The Pilgrims,” “The West,” and “The First Americans, The Indians.”²⁴¹ Cashin wrote that all her outerwear was “meant for creature-comfort and [was] as no-nonsense as a Pioneer’s trek.”²⁴² “Creature-comfort” and “Pioneer’s trek” are intended to identify her coats and wraps as country things.

She named this garment the “Big Flamenco Cape;” a name that conjures images of lively flamenco dancers in southern Spain. It seems she listed the fabric of this cape

239. Iverson, “Chic is Where You Find It.”

240. *Women’s Wear Daily*, “Cashin in Advance.”

241. Cashin and Sills, “Fall Opening May 1, 1975” (collection essay).

242. *Ibid.*, 3.

specifically in the collection essay for spring of 1975 which states, “a large polka-dotted jacquard [sic] woolen has an Andalusian feel.”²⁴³ Andalusia is the region in southern Spain where flamenco music originated. We are meant to think of nightlife and traveling abroad. Flamenco music is vivacious and filled with life, you could wonder through the streets of Seville listening to flamenco guitar wrapped in this cape. On the return home, it could be your travel blanket or fold flat to be neatly stowed in your luggage.

I found three advertisements that depict similar outerwear. The first is by Lord and Taylor and was printed in the *New York Times* in March 1975 (Figure 5-4). This ad is for “a coat that swings like a voluminous cape set off by narrow sleeves.” The title of the ad is “the big, wide, wonderful whirl of Bonnie Cashin.” This is a play-on-words where “whirl” replaces “world” thereby relating the cape and Cashin herself to world travel. This advertisement lists the coat for \$300.00.

The second advertisement is from *Harper's Bazaar* in 1968 (Figure 5-5), the weary or thoughtful traveler I mentioned earlier. The advertisement seems to be as much for TWA as for the Cashin cape. The chic young woman is standing by her luggage, leashed poodle at her feet. This cape is half the length of the TCM Flamenco cape. The caption reads, “catch the TWA morning flight...[sic] in Higbee's dashing new leather-rimmed cape. Created by Bonnie Cashin for Philip Sills in textured charcoal grey. 150.00.” According to this ad, capes are definitely for chic international travel.

The last advertisement is from a photo spread in *Vogue* from 1968 (Figure 5-6) and depicts a woman standing on a peak at the rocky top of the Andes mountains overlooking Machu Picchu dressed in Cashin-esque layers with a quilted suede cape around her waist and sandals with criss-crossed ties extending from her toes to her knees. The model and photo are theatrical. The page is titled “The explorers” and the caption below reads, “INCA-GOLD SUEDE: Throwing custom to the winds and quilting to mid-calf, a cape turns skirt for the fling of it—circling far out about dirndled thighs: the whole look is pulled together with a llama *ruana*, a leather weskit, an Inca-gold turtleneck. Suede turnout by Bonnie Cashin for Philip Sills.” This ad depicts Cashin's leather and suede designs as rugged, outdoor-explorer wear. Showing the cape around the model's waist illustrates the versatility of Cashin's flat-folding outerwear which she often claimed could be used as blankets or lap coats.

243. Cashin and Sills, “Spring Opening Nov. 6, 1974” (collection essay), 2.

Not only did Cashin repeat details and forms of clothing, but she also repeated the rhetoric in her collection essays. They almost always mentioned layering and practicality, included a section on color and texture, referred to country and city life and the special clothing needs of each, and discussed the fabrics in tactile and indulgent ways, and mentioned the sources of them. By maintaining these ideas and repeating them to the buyer and to the press she deftly managed her own image as an artist and the image of her brand. Repetition in design and rhetoric also provided tremendous brand consistency, a key factor in brand strength. There is no mistaking the Cashin look, or the meaning she invested in it. The five Cashin garments in the TCM collection that were the focus of this analysis are examples of these themes in how they illustrate Cashin's characteristic design details and her philosophy and thereby provide a link to how they were marketed.

Summary of Themes

This study connected the five TCM garments and ensembles to Cashin's design process and philosophy. As a result, we can see that Cashin's philosophy regarding modern practicality in dress, avoidance of obsolescence in fashion, and travel were consistently part of her clothing designs. We also know more about Cashin's design process—particularly as shown in the sequence of evidence related to the poncho and pants ensemble. Cashin's design for the TCM poncho was made up into the TCM sample from her drawing, and the drawing was also used to suggest coordinating pieces and record design changes. A second sample model was then made up with suggested changes. Model numbers and color names were assigned somewhere in this process and recorded on the sketches, then used to create subsequent sketches and sample models. This process is shown in the slightly different version of the poncho in the Young Research Library sketch and as worn and photographed for publicity purposes as seen in the photos from both the TCM and Young Research Library collections.

I was not able to find any details about how Cashin and Sills assigned the model numbers on the samples and sketches. It is interesting to speculate about the one-digit difference between the two poncho models in the two sketches (#3842 for the shorter poncho and #2842 for the longer poncho). Perhaps changing only the first digit of the number indicated a slight change in the design. A note on the sketch of the suit makes it clear that she did use her past designs to develop new ones, "2791 shape with sleeve

change and cardigan neck,” and that her designs were modular since she added new design elements to previous patterns. It is also probable that Cashin used her sketches to propose their wholesale/retail pricing schemes, as the sketch of the longer poncho shows with about an 80% mark-up for the poncho alone and an 85% mark-up for the poncho and pant ensemble.

Cashin’s and Sills’ manufacturing process is still not well understood. I was not able to find specific documentation or many details pertaining to it. There are some hints to this process, however. For example, the poncho and pants sequence of evidence gives us some insight into how much input or control Cashin seemed to have over details of production and retailing for each of her designs and how the process worked from her side. Her early sketches showed that she began preparing the design concepts and press and retail materials from the beginning of each idea, and elaborated on her ideas not only in the essays but also in advertisements, press interviews, and industry media articles. Her designs were unusual enough that her mother was brought in to show workers how to cut and sew them, which indicates that Cashin herself did not attend to this level of manufacturing detail but wanted specific results. Sills was clearly in charge of the leather production and the high standards required by Cashin for her pieces.

Cashin’s role in marketing was significant. The Cashin brand was built from Cashin’s design philosophy. Her philosophy of slowly evolving her aesthetic over years, rather than revolutionizing the look of each season’s collections established one clear message for consumers about the meaning and use of her clothing that was intended for a narrow group of women, not the masses. Subsequently her ability to maintain a consistent aesthetic and message involving active, outdoors, and travel lifestyles strengthened her brand and created her success as a niche-market ready-to-wear designer with a loyal following of fans that one journalist referred to as her “cultists.”²⁴⁴

We now know these particular TCM artifacts were models and not retailed garments as such. There was not enough documentation in the TCM or other Cashin archives to determine which might have been used in a runway show, except for the Tin Lizzie, which was worn by a model on a showroom runway in a TCM photograph. As several advertisements and Cashin’s sketches show, there is good evidence the Tin Lizzie coat, a version of the poncho and pants, and the Flamenco cape were produced in one

244. Morris, "Fashion Catches Up to Cashin."

form or another for retail sale. I was not able to find any evidence that the Half and Half coat or tweed suit were retailed. This object analysis makes it clear, however, they are distinctive examples of Cashin's work for Sills and Co. in terms of details such as large pockets, use of leather and suede in combination with heavily textured fabric, and the seemingly simple construction that provides a classic rather than trendy quality to the garments. Cashin did follow certain trends in fashion, using popular colors and in the length of some of her garments as hemlines changed in the 1960s and 70s, but the garments always remain essentially true to her design philosophy.

This discussion of her work in the context of these three themes illustrates not only her design philosophy but portrays how her strong and consistent philosophy bolstered her brand. The theme of details shows that she distinguished her work, kept it recognizable and visually portrayed her philosophy, which contributed, to her brand image. The theme of Cashin's design philosophy illustrates that she used the framework of her own lifestyle to create functional clothing. Finally, the theme of marketing shows that her rhetoric about her clothing united the ideas and purpose of her work and developed public perception of her brand.



Figure 5-1 Advertisement for suede and raccoon coat by Style Trends; Vogue, October 15, 1963.

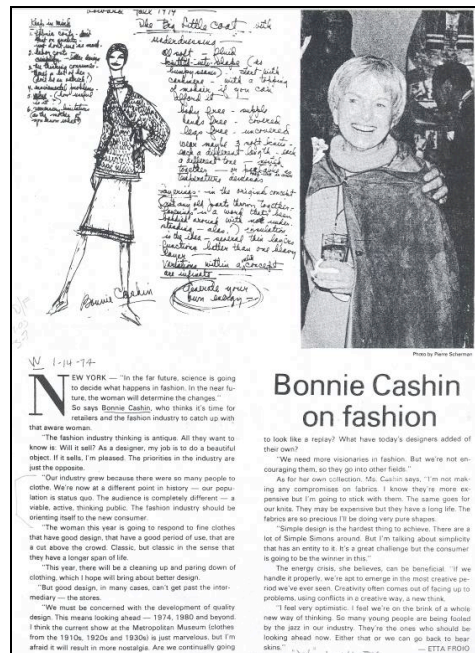


Figure 5-2 Etta Froio, "Bonnie Cashin on Fashion," W, Jan. 14, 1974; Cashin file clipping no. 9, Fashion Institute of Technology.



Figure 5-3 Advertisement of bloomers by Cashin for Sills; Women's Wear Daily, October 30, 1976; Cashin file 3, clipping no. 2, Fashion Institute of Technology.



Figure 5-4 Advertisement by Lord and Taylor for coat by Cashin for Sills; New York Times, March 7, 1975, Cashin file 4, clipping no. 8, Fashion Institute of Technology.



Figure 5-5 Advertisement of cape by Cashin for Sills; Harper's Bazaar, 1968; Cashin file 2, clipping no. 2, Fashion Institute of Technology.



Figure 5-6 Advertisement for quilted suede cape worn as a skirt by Cashin for Sills; Vogue October, 15, 1968

Chapter 6: Summary

This chapter summarizes the research and specifies what was learned from this study. I succinctly address my research goals of: 1) connecting these garments to Cashin's design process and philosophy; 2) understanding the Sills manufacturing process; 3) understanding Cashin's role in marketing such pieces; and 4) determining if these artifacts were produced commercially. I also address the overarching purpose of the study: to document and interpret the TCM collection of Cashin artifacts, which is a significant attribute and contribution of this study. Finally, the significance of this study and future research are explained.

The Research Process and Findings

The literature I reviewed greatly informed my understanding of Bonnie Cashin's life, career, philosophy, and influences. Cashin is well known and highly regarded by scholars as an American fashion designer, and her garments have been well-used as primary source artifacts in several exhibitions of her work. Only recently one scholar, Stephanie Day Iverson,²⁴⁵ has comprehensively studied Cashin's life and work. Primary contemporaneous sources, such as news articles and advertisements, were an important category of literature reviewed in this study because they provided insight into the public's view of her work and clues as to how it was marketed and how Cashin worked to create her own brand. Through analysis of these primary and secondary sources, it became clear that Cashin's personal history and her interests in travel and outdoor activities, for example, greatly influenced her design process and philosophy.

This research began by choosing five garments and ensembles from those in the TCM collection that were donated by Philip Sills. The method of research was centered on Prown's material culture model²⁴⁶ of three sequential steps: description, deduction, and speculation. Since this was an artifact analysis it kept the study grounded in the collection. In the description step I learned to keep descriptions somewhat concise so as not to lose sight of the garment as a whole. The deduction step involved understanding the garment in the context of its use by a potential wearer. In the speculation step connections were forged between the artifacts and Bonnie Cashin's work as a whole, her design process, and philosophy. In this

245. Who is now Stephanie Lake.

246. Prown, "Mind in Matter."

last step I drew from primary sources I found in external archives. In practice, I discovered the importance and difficulty of following the three steps in order. Initially, minute measurements cluttered my descriptions and I had to step back and think of each garment as one unit. Moving beyond description in the speculation step was the most difficult for me. In fact, Steele advocates the use of this model as a tool to move beyond description to explanation, to get at the meanings behind the clothing.²⁴⁷ Use of more general history research methods centered on critically analyzing both primary and secondary source materials, such as archival materials, encyclopedia entries, online exhibitions, exhibition catalogues, and contemporary news articles and advertisements, added a level of richness to this study by illuminating several key ideas and meanings.

From the findings in my artifact analysis and the research in external archives of Cashin's work, I developed three key themes: 1) details of the artifacts which are characteristic of Cashin's work for Sills and Co., 2) Cashin's design philosophy as reflected in the artifacts, and 3) the marketing of Cashin's garments. The discussion of her work in the context of these three themes portrays how her strong and consistent philosophy bolstered her brand. These themes also connected the TCM garments directly to Cashin's work, her design philosophy, and the marketing of her clothing designs for Sills and Co.

The theme of details shows that she distinguished her work through the constant use of specific garment and design details, kept it recognizable and visually portrayed her philosophy, all of which contributed to her brand image. In this study, the theme of details revealed aspects of Cashin's design process, such as how she borrowed from her past designs and repeated ideas or concepts from one season to another. The theme of details also illustrates the extent to which her choice of materials and specific structural and functional elements supported her brand image by directly relating to her philosophy.

The theme of Cashin's design philosophy illustrates that she used the framework of her own lifestyle to create functional clothing. Cashin's philosophy about clothing was the genesis of the Cashin look and the foundation of her brand. Her philosophy can be defined using three perspectives: a woman's wardrobe, movement and simplicity, and woman on the go. Cashin's concept of a wardrobe was classic not trendy, modular, casual, and functional for active women. An important part of clothing function was its ability to facilitate

247. Steele, "A Museum of Fashion is More Than a Clothes-Bag," 332.

movement. She accommodated movement by designing straightforward clothing forms—much of her outerwear designs were simply-constructed wraps or geometrically shaped garments. She is also credited with introducing layered dressing to American fashion—many thin layers accommodate movement more comfortably and efficiently than bulky coats. Layers also accommodate changes in temperature as one traveled, and Cashin was a woman on the go who designed clothing to suit that need. Her garments folded flat to pack neatly. Many of her fabric choices were seasonless in regard to color and texture and needed little maintenance—when unpacked her garments needed little care to look good. Overall, this study shows how important individual ideas were to her multi-faceted philosophy and how both ideas and philosophy were intertwined in each garment. This intertwining lent strength and consistency to her philosophy, which came from her personal needs for clothing that accommodated her own lifestyle. While this focus on her own needs might be seen to lead to a lack of concern in developing a mass audience for her brand, I would contend that Cashin's narrowed focus instead lent strength and consistency to her brand. Her philosophy therefore informed her brand—the look and meanings of her clothing.

Finally, the theme of marketing shows that her rhetoric about her clothing united the ideas and purpose of her work and developed public perception of her brand. Her philosophy directly informed her marketing—at least that over which she had control. Her collection essays were about her philosophy. When she talked about her clothing to the press, she talked about her philosophy. At photo shoots she directed models to play the part of free spirited active women. By doing these things she built a brand image with clothing and rhetoric that supported each other and was based on the consistent message of her philosophy.

The Goals

The goals of my research were to 1) connect the garments and ensembles to Cashin's design process and philosophy; 2) understand the Sills manufacturing process; 3) understand Cashin's role in marketing such pieces; and 4) determine if these artifacts were produced commercially. Not all of these goals were completely met.

Connecting the five garments and ensembles to Cashin's design process and philosophy was accomplished and discussed in Chapters Four and Five. The object analysis revealed aspects of Cashin's design process, such as how she borrowed from her past designs

and repeated ideas or concepts from one season to another. Cashin also used her design process and the sketches to give meanings to the garments as concepts, in how she named colors and portrayed the garments in motion or use. We also learn about the influences and inspirations in her design process in how she incorporated ideas from her travels or from other cultures and then used these ideas to name her garments and give further meaning to them as a concept. Cashin's design process can be seen especially in the sequence of materials related to the poncho and pants ensemble. The TCM has a dated sketch of a shorter poncho with pants, a shorter model poncho with pants, and a press photo of a longer poncho with pants. When compared to a later dated sketch of a longer poncho from the Young Research Library there is evidence that designs for this ensemble were sketched, sewn, and then sketched and sewn again. The sketch of the tweed suit shows that past patterns were altered with new design details. The collarless TCM suit jacket was based on an earlier pattern with a shawl collar. All five of the TCM garments and ensembles were shown to be good examples of her philosophy in Chapter Five.

Cashin's manufacturing process is still not well understood. Within the scope of this study, I was not able to find information about how her sketches were used to create pattern blocks or model garments. Cashin seems mostly to have used her sketches to portray her designs to those who constructed them, but we do not know what input she had in making the patterns, for example. More information about the use of Sills and Co. numbers and model garment tags would aid the understanding of the Sills manufacturing process.

More is understood about Cashin's role in marketing through this study. She played a key role in solidifying her brand image. Since her personal and design philosophy about clothing so thoroughly informed the marketing of her clothing, the marketing in which she took part is the exact message of her brand. Cashin's role in marketing included her direct participation in writing collection essays, in interviews with the press, and advertising her designs many times with her original concept sketches. Collection essays were given to buyers and journalists who then passed on Cashin's concrete messages about her clothing designs and the philosophy behind them. For buyers, these essays were instructions about how to sell and merchandise Cashin's clothing. Cashin wrote that active women with a small frame should wear her clothing, and that her entire collections should be merchandised as a whole each season. Journalists used Cashin's descriptions of her collections when covering

each season, often quoting her directly from the collection essays. In this way Cashin informed the public of her philosophy and gave meaning to the garments by stating the reasons for design details and wardrobe concepts. In advertisements she used her sketches and controlled models in photo shoots in order to visually present her ideas about active women. Additionally, her design details were used as signifiers of her design philosophy and ultimately her brand. Her design philosophy, of designing practical clothing for active women who lived in the city, played in the country, and traveled frequently, was strong. Cashin consistently drew from it to create new clothing concepts as well as to contextualize and brand her work. The consistency in the look of her clothing and in the lifestyle ideas her clothing portrayed was the foundation of the Bonnie Cashin brand.

The goal of determining if these artifacts were produced commercially was partially met. Based on the archival and advertising materials discussed, it is likely that the Tin Lizzie, a version of the poncho and pants, and the Flamenco cape were produced and retailed. Not enough information was found related to the Half and Half or tweed suit to know whether or not they were retailed.

The Purpose

The overarching purpose of this study was to document and interpret the TCM collection of Cashin artifacts. This purpose was robustly achieved and it makes this study significant since there was no documentation in the TCM about the Cashin artifacts and little documentation about any sub-collection or aspects of the collection as a whole. This purpose was achieved mainly by using Prown's material culture model²⁴⁸ of artifact analysis because it kept the study focused on and grounded in the TCM collection artifacts. The documentation provided by this study increases awareness of the Cashin sub-collection and suggests how it can be augmented to show a more full scope of the designer's look. This study can also enhance the curriculum of fashion design and fashion history by providing content about what this sub-collection represents, i.e.: Cashin's philosophy and brand, and how it does that in a very concrete way.

248. Prown, "Mind in Matter."

The Significance of This Study

This study is significant because it creates documentation for the TCM collection and provides a thorough, descriptive, and interpretive connection between the studied garments and Cashin's design process and philosophy and presents a cursory examination of Cashin's role in marketing and creating her brand. Prior to this study, only minimal records regarding the mechanics of the donation and simple accession descriptions of the Cashin artifacts existed in the TCM files. This study has expanded those records to include a concise history of the Sills donation and detailed descriptions of the five garments and ensembles and their coordinating artifacts that link them to Cashin's work and philosophy. Some museum exhibitions have used artifact analysis to connect garments in the exhibition to Cashin's broader work and philosophy. The difference between this analysis and many of those museum exhibitions is the thoroughness and multi-layered description of specific objects and the material cultural perspective that grounds and shapes this study. Exhibitions have not forged these connections in as much depth as presented in this study, and few have incorporated a wider range of related materials with the clothing artifacts. Currently, there is no discussion in the literature about the manufacturing or marketing of Cashin's clothing and I found only brief hints about how she worked. This study, therefore, adds greatly to the understanding of Cashin and her work within these perspectives. analyzes artifacts to build an understanding of the work of Bonnie Cashin as a significant and innovative American fashion designer,

Directions for Future Research

I will conclude my paper with some suggestions for future research. Most obviously, the remainder of the Bonnie Cashin garments and ensembles in the ISU TCM collection need to be documented. I gathered a few images that relate to some of these other artifacts during my research and added to the collection copies of other collection essays, interviews, and speeches. I hope that documenting the remaining artifacts can be done as a follow-up to this work.

The methodology employed in this study is not new, but it is little used. This methodology can be used to thoroughly study more artifacts in the TCM to further advance documentation and interpretation of that collection. The current situation of sparse

documentation means that the testament of those artifacts is concealed. Increasing the documentation of the TCM at ISU will reveal more stories of the past, and begin to sketch a picture of the TCM collection that can portray its breadth and depth. Ultimately, this will elevate the reputation of the TCM and textiles and clothing program to the level to which it belongs.

A thorough biography of Cashin's life is needed, and I understand that Iverson is currently working on one. Pertaining to Cashin's work, a study of her sketches as compared to her writing would be an interesting addition to the scholarship on Bonnie Cashin. During my research, I noticed that a great deal of her ideas reference past fashions, but in her writing and speaking about fashion design she was critical of what she referred to as "looking in the rear view mirror." This may not be the hypocrisy it appears to be, but rather a more accurate perspective would be to see how she blended her ideas about modernity and practicality with references, images, and looks of the past or of other cultures. This might be approached with a postmodern or semiotic framework.

Another area that would benefit from some work would be decoding the tags attached to the garments since many collections that received donations of model clothing from Philip Sills. Such a study would likely require a comparison of many of the tagged garments across many collections. Sills and Co. was not continued after Philip Sills retirement in 1977,²⁴⁹ and he passed away in 1988,²⁵⁰ so those avenues of research may be closed unless business records still exist. Understanding the system of these tags would likely uncover aspects of the manufacturing process at Sills and Co. This could be combined with information about the sourcing of materials written in the collection essays in order to develop a picture of how clothing designs became retailed garments.

There are references to Cashin's interest in educating and philanthropy. I know she gave several lectures at the Fashion Institute of Technology, for instance, and created the Innovative Design Fund; however, it is unclear to what extent she was involved in education or philanthropy. A history of her work outside of clothing design is definitely missing. The extent of the Bonnie Cashin Collection at the Young Research Library and archives throughout New York City seem to be adequate to begin that history.

249. Iverson, *Bonnie Cashin: Practical Dreamer*, 20.

250. *New York Times*, "Philip Sills, 68, Maker of Women's Clothing."

During my research I noticed increasing public awareness of Bonnie Cashin's designs. Current fashion magazines and Internet sites devoted to fashion and sewing mention her and her famous toggles and pockets more frequently in the past three or four years. This seems to be linked to a resurging trend in mid-twentieth century design. I hope this waxing interest in mid-twentieth century design and Cashin's work in particular will lead to increased academic scholarship about her life and work.

Appendix A: Sources from Various Cashin Archives

Following is a list of sources gathered for this study from the Brooklyn Museum of Art, the Charles E. Young Research Library at the University of California Los Angeles, and the Fashion Institute of Technology. The list of sources is further sorted by type: collection essays, news articles, and advertisements. There is also a list of the collection essays at the Textiles and Clothing Museum at Iowa State University where this study was based. This is by no means a complete list of Bonnie Cashin artifacts held by these institutions; it is included to provide readers a picture of the types of sources used in this study.

Brooklyn Museum of Art

Collection Essays

Cashin, Bonnie and Philip Sills, "Spring Opening November 3, 1966." Collection essay for the spring 1967 collection; Cashin file, Brooklyn Museum of Art.

———, "Sills and Co. Spring Opening Nov. 4. 1971." Collection essay for the spring 1972 collection; Cashin file, Brooklyn Museum of Art.

———, "Sills and Co. Spring Opening Nov. 7, 1975." Collection essay for the spring 1976 collection; Cashin file, Brooklyn Museum of Art.

———, "Sills and Co. Fall Opening May 6, 1976." Collection essay for the fall 1976 collection; Cashin file, Brooklyn Museum of Art.

———, "Sills and Co. Fall Opening April 21, 1977." Collection essay for the fall 1977 collection; Cashin file, Brooklyn Museum of Art.

News Articles

Cashin, Bonnie. "Sounding Off: Nurturing American Designers." *Washington Star*, April 8, 1981; Cashin file, Brooklyn Museum of Art.

Hoffman, Marilyn. "Casual Wear Goes Chic." *Christian Science Monitor*, November 5, 1962; Cashin file, Brooklyn Museum of Art.

New York Herald-Tribune, "Bonnie Cashin's Tongue-in-Cheek Furs," June 21, 1962; Cashin file, Brooklyn Museum of Art.

Thomas, Kay. "Bonnie Cashin is Noted for Easy Casual Clothes." *Sunday News*, September 30, 1962; Cashin file Brooklyn Museum of Art.

Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California Los Angeles

Cashin's work-related papers were donated to the Young Research Library by her estate in 2004, and they are now collectively known as the Bonnie Cashin Collection of Fashion, Theater, and Film Costume Design.²⁵¹ In an email I received from Stephanie Lake she said about this archive, "It is the most comprehensive Cashin archive on paper."²⁵² The Bonnie Cashin Foundation does not have a physical collection of Cashin artifacts, but retains a digital copy and holds all the rights to the artifacts donated to the Young Research Library by her estate.²⁵³ Following is a list of collection essays I used from this collection. Many designer sketches in this collection were also helpful for this research.

Collection Essays

- Cashin, Bonnie and Philip Sills, "Fall-Winter 1961-Press Preview May 18, 1961-Opening May 22, 1961." Collection essay for the fall 1961 collection; Bonnie Cashin Collection of Fashion, Theater, and Film Costume Design (Collection Number 440). Department of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA.
- , "Press Preview Nov. 7th-Opening Nov. 8, 1961." Collection essay for the spring 1962 collection; Bonnie Cashin Collection of Fashion, Theater, and Film Costume Design (Collection Number 440). Department of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA.
- , "Press Preview May 23rd-Opening May 24th, 1962." Collection essay for the fall 1962 collection; Bonnie Cashin Collection of Fashion, Theater, and Film Costume Design (Collection Number 440). Department of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA.
- , "Sills and Co. Spring Opening Nov. 2, 1972." Collection essay for the spring 1973 collection; Bonnie Cashin Collection of Fashion, Theater, and Film Costume Design (Collection Number 440). Department of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA.

251. Stephanie Lake, e-mail message to the author, July 5, 2007.

252. Ibid.

253. Ibid. Lake, herself, was gifted Cashin's "personal effects, her entire clothing collection, and a selection of drawings and photographs," upon Cashin's death in 2000; Stephanie Lake, e-mail message to the author, July 5, 2007.

- , "Sills and Co. Fall Opening May 3, 1973." Collection essay for the fall 1973 collection; Bonnie Cashin Collection of Fashion, Theater, and Film Costume Design (Collection Number 440). Department of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA.
- , "Sills and Co. Spring Opening Nov. 1, 1973." Collection essay for the spring 1974 collection; Bonnie Cashin Collection of Fashion, Theater, and Film Costume Design (Collection Number 440). Department of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA.
- , "Sills and Co. Spring Opening Nov. 6, 1974." Collection essay for the spring 1975 collection; Bonnie Cashin Collection of Fashion, Theater, and Film Costume Design (Collection Number 440). Department of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA.
- , "Sills and Co. Fall Opening May 1, 1975." Collection essay for the fall 1975 collection; Bonnie Cashin Collection of Fashion, Theater, and Film Costume Design (Collection Number 440). Department of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA.

Fashion Institute of Technology

News Articles

- Cashin, Bonnie. "The Elegant Solution." Written for *American Fabrics and Fashions*; Cashin file 2, clipping no. 9, Fashion Institute of Technology.
- Cunningham, Bill. "Into the Woods." *Women's Wear Daily*, December 14, 1962; Cashin file 1, clipping 1, Fashion Institute of Technology.
- Froio, Etta. "Bonnie Cashin on Fashion." *W*, January 14, 1974; Cashin file 3, clipping no. 7, Fashion Institute of Technology.
- . "Bonnie Cashin Says, 'I Need my Dream Periods.'" *Women's Wear Daily*, November 15, 1968; Cashin file 1, clipping no. 9, Fashion Institute of Technology.
- Klensch, Elsa. "Bonnie Cashin Hates to Use the Work 'New,' But Her Fall Collection for Philip Sills is One of the Freshest." *Women's Wear Daily*, May 4, 1971; Cashin file 1, clipping no. 6, Fashion Institute of Technology.

- Morris, Bernadine. "Cashin—The Fun Goes On." *New York Times*, May 4, 1973; Cashin file 2, clipping no. 9, Fashion Institute of Technology.
- . "For Bonnie Cashin, It's a Time to Shine." *New York Times*, May 5, 1972; Cashin file 2, clipping no. 5, Fashion Institute of Technology.
- . "Functional Gloves That Pack a Wallop." *New York Times*, August 1, 1970; Cashin file 1, clipping no. 1, Fashion Institute of Technology.
- . "The Inimitable Bonnie Cashin." *New York Times*, October 1969; Cashin file 2, clipping no. 3, Fashion Institute of Technology.
- . "She Views Sweaters as a Way of Life." *New York Times*, October 15, 1972; Cashin file 2, clipping no. 6, Fashion Institute of Technology.
- . "A Style of Old is New Again." *New York Times*, September 12, 1976; Cashin file 5, clipping no. 5, Fashion Institute of Technology.
- . "To Bonnie Cashin, Obsolescence in Fashion is Obsolete." *New York Times*, May 1, 1970; Cashin file 1, clipping no. 2, Fashion Institute of Technology.
- New York Times*, "Fall Fashion Shows Begin," May 15, 1964; Cashin file 1, clipping no. 4, Fashion Institute of Technology.
- Preston, Ruth. "Bonnie Cashin's Noh Play." *New York Post*, May 5, 1972; Cashin file 2, clipping no. 1, Fashion Institute of Technology.
- . "The Modern Heirloom." *New York Post*, May 3, 1974, Cashin file 3, clipping no. 9, Fashion Institute of Technology.
- Sheppard, Eugenia. "Knit One, Purl One." *New York Post*, May 24, 1973; Cashin file 3, clipping no. 4, Fashion Institute of Technology.
- Thomas, Kay. "Fashion and the Cult of Cashin: Bonnie's a Standout Amid Individualists." *Sunday News*, March 27, 1966; Cashin file 1, folder no. 6, Fashion Institute of Technology.
- Women's Wear Daily*, "Bonnie's Bubble," May 4, 1973; Cashin file 3, clipping no. 1, Fashion Institute of Technology.
- , "Bonnie Cashin," November 3, 1972; Cashin file 1, clipping no. 10, Fashion Institute of Technology.
- , "Bonnie Cashin Opened her Spring Collection for Philip Sills Thursday Morning," October 31, 1969; Cashin file 2, clipping no. 6, Fashion Institute of Technology.

- , "Bonnie Cashin's Summer Plan," March 28, 1962; Cashin file 1, clipping no. 2, Fashion Institute of Technology.
- , "Cashin for Philip Sills," May 7, 1976; Cashin file 5, clipping no. 1, Fashion Institute of Technology.
- , "Bonnie Cashin for Philip Sills and The Knittery," May 8, 1976; Cashin file 5, clipping no. 7, Fashion Institute of Technology.
- , "Cashin in Advance," April 29, 1969; Cashin file 2, clipping no. 4, Fashion Institute of Technology.
- , "Cashin in on Cashmere," December 23, 1976; Cashin file 5, clipping no. 10, Fashion Institute of Technology.
- , "Market Basket," July 25, 2000.
- , "Now: Fall in New York: Bonnie Cashin," May 4, 1973; Cashin file 3, clipping no. 2, Fashion Institute of Technology.
- , "Now: Fall in New York: The Knittery," May 24, 1973; Cashin file 2, clipping no. 10, Fashion Institute of Technology.
- , "The Sportswear and Leisure Living," November 4, 1971; Cashin file 1, clipping no. 7, Fashion Institute of Technology.

Advertisements

- Fashion of the Times*, March 5, 1972, advertisement of coatdress and shell by Cashin for Sills; Cashin file 2, clipping no. 3, Fashion Institute of Technology.
- Harper's Bazaar*, 1968, advertisement of cape by Cashin for Sills; Cashin file 2, clipping no. 2, Fashion Institute of Technology.
- New York Times*, February 9, 1975, advertisement by Saks Fifth Avenue for Cashin for Sills; Cashin file 3, clipping no. 10, Fashion Institute of Technology.
- New York Times*, March 7, 1975, advertisement by Lord and Taylor for Cashin for Sills; Cashin file 4, clipping no. 8, Fashion Institute of Technology.
- The New York Times Magazine*, August 29, 1971, advertisement of Cashin cape by Sills and Co.; Cashin file 1, clipping no. 8, Fashion Institute of Technology.
- Vogue*, July 1972, advertisement for Cashin wool suit by Sills and Co.; Cashin file 2, clipping no. 8, Fashion Institute of Technology.

Vogue, September 1, 1968, advertisement of Cashin coat and bloomers by Sills and Co.;

Cashin file 2, clipping no. 1, Fashion Institute of Technology.

Women's Wear Daily, May 8, 1976, advertisement; Cashin file 5, clipping no. 7, Fashion Institute of Technology.

———, October 29, 1963, advertisement of Cashin suit by Sills and Co.; Cashin file 1, clipping no. 3, Fashion Institute of Technology.

———, October 30, 1976, advertisement for Cashin bloomers by Sills and Co.; Cashin file 3, clipping no. 2, Fashion Institute of Technology.

Textiles and Clothing Museum at Iowa State University

Collection Essays

Cashin, Bonnie and Philip Sills. "Fall-Winter 1964-65 Press showing May 14-Opening May 18." Collection essay for the fall 1964 collection; Cashin file, The Textiles and Clothing Museum, Iowa State University.

———, "Opening Fall 1967-May 4, 1967." Collection essay for the fall 1967 collection; Cashin file, The Textiles and Clothing Museum, Iowa State University.

———, "Sills Spring 1971-Opening Nov. 12, 1970." Collection essay for the spring 1971 collection; Cashin file, The Textiles and Clothing Museum, Iowa State University.

———, "Sills Fall Winter 1972 Opening May 4, '72." Collection essay for the fall 1972 collection; Cashin file, The Textiles and Clothing Museum, Iowa State University.

Appendix B: Collections of Bonnie Cashin Artifacts

This list was compiled by Stephanie Lake and is published on the Bonnie Cashin Foundation website.²⁵⁴ Three differences here are the addition of “Young Research Library” to the listing of University of California Los Angeles, “Shippensburg University,” their current name as per their website²⁵⁵ (Lake used their former name, Shippensburg State College) and “The Goldstein Museum of Design” their current name as per their website²⁵⁶ (Lake used “The Goldstein Gallery”). It appears that Lake created this list mainly from records of donations, possibly Cashin’s or from Philip Sills, and I do not know if she has verified that all of these institutions still have Bonnie Cashin artifacts. I do know she has visited several of these collections for research and exhibition purposes. It is unclear which institutions have clothing artifacts, paper artifacts, or both.

Museums and Non-School Institutions

Brooklyn Museum of Art, Brooklyn, New York
 Chicago Historical Society, Chicago, Illinois
 Cooper Hewitt Museum, New York City
 Library and Museum of Performing Arts at Lincoln Center, New York City
 Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, California
 Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City
 Museum of the City of New York, New York City
 The New York State Museum, Albany, New York
 Newark Museum, Newark, New Jersey
 Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
 Phoenix Art Museum, Phoenix, Arizona
 Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Canada
 The Schenectady Museum, Schenectady, New York
 Smithsonian Museum, Washington DC
 State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin
 Victoria and Albert Museum, London
 Western Reserve Historical Museum, Cleveland, Ohio

Schools

Cornell University, Ithaca, New York
 Drexel Institute, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
 Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising, Los Angeles, California

254. Lake, "Museum Collections."

255. Shippensburg University, "Brief History."

256. University of Minnesota, "The Goldstein Museum of Design."

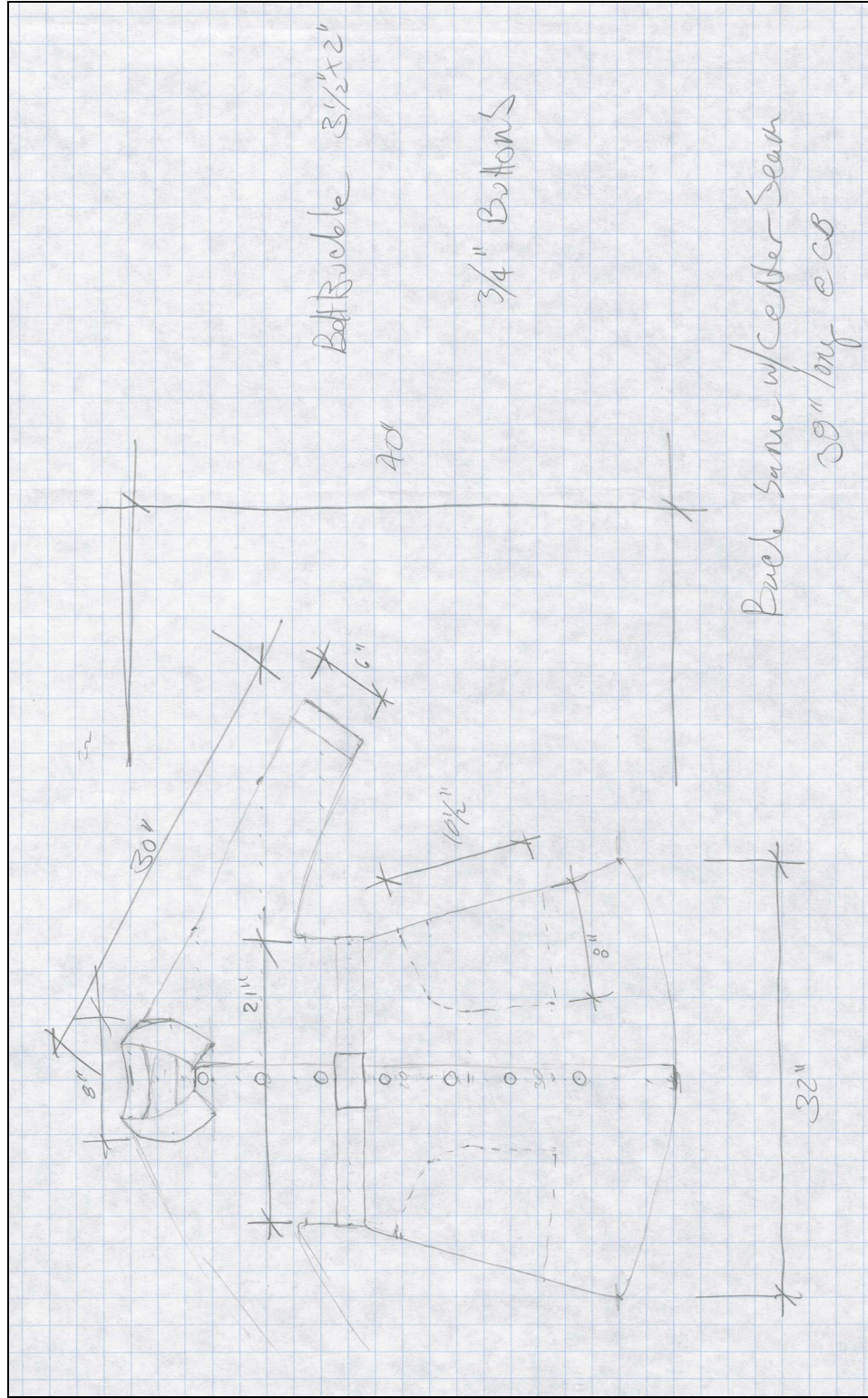
Schools Continued

Fashion Institute of Technology, New York City
Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa
Miami-Dade Community College, Miami, Florida
Mount Mary College, Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio
Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, Rhode Island
Shippensburg University, Shippensburg, Pennsylvania
Southern Illinois University Carbondale, Carbondale, Illinois
Stephens College, Columbia, Missouri
Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas
University of California Los Angeles, Young Research Library, Los Angeles, California
University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, Ohio
University of Delaware, Newark, Delaware
University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland
University of Minnesota, The Goldstein Museum of Design, St. Paul, Minnesota
University of Vermont, Burlington, VT
University of Washington, Seattle, Washington
University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin
Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts, Richmond, Virginia
Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri
Westbrook College, Portland, Maine

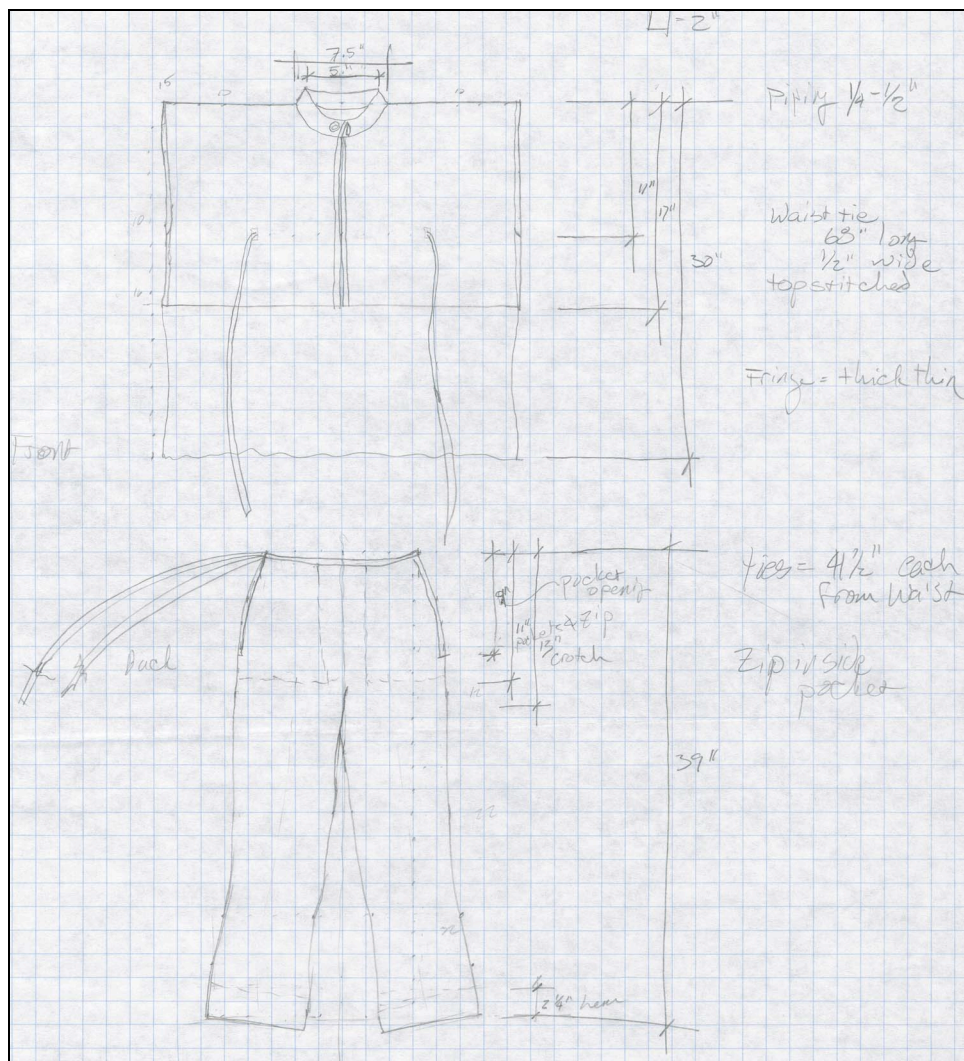
Appendix C: Measured Drawings of Garments and Ensembles

These are the measured proportional drawings for the five garments and ensembles analyzed. They were made during the description stage for each artifact. The drawings were a tool to help see details and help thoroughly analyze each piece. Other parts of this process were photography, extensive note-taking, and the written analysis. The drawings do not represent completely thorough measurements of each garment; in cases where the back was similar to the front but had less detail, only the front of the garment was drawn. These drawings were not intended for use as pattern-making tools, as fit or to-scale drawings, or as illustrations of the garments for the reader. They are provided here because they represent part of the research process and provide some measurements that were omitted in the text that may be of interest. The following drawings include the Tin Lizzie coat, the Half and Half coatdress, the tweed poncho and pants, the tweed suit, and the Big Flamenco cape.

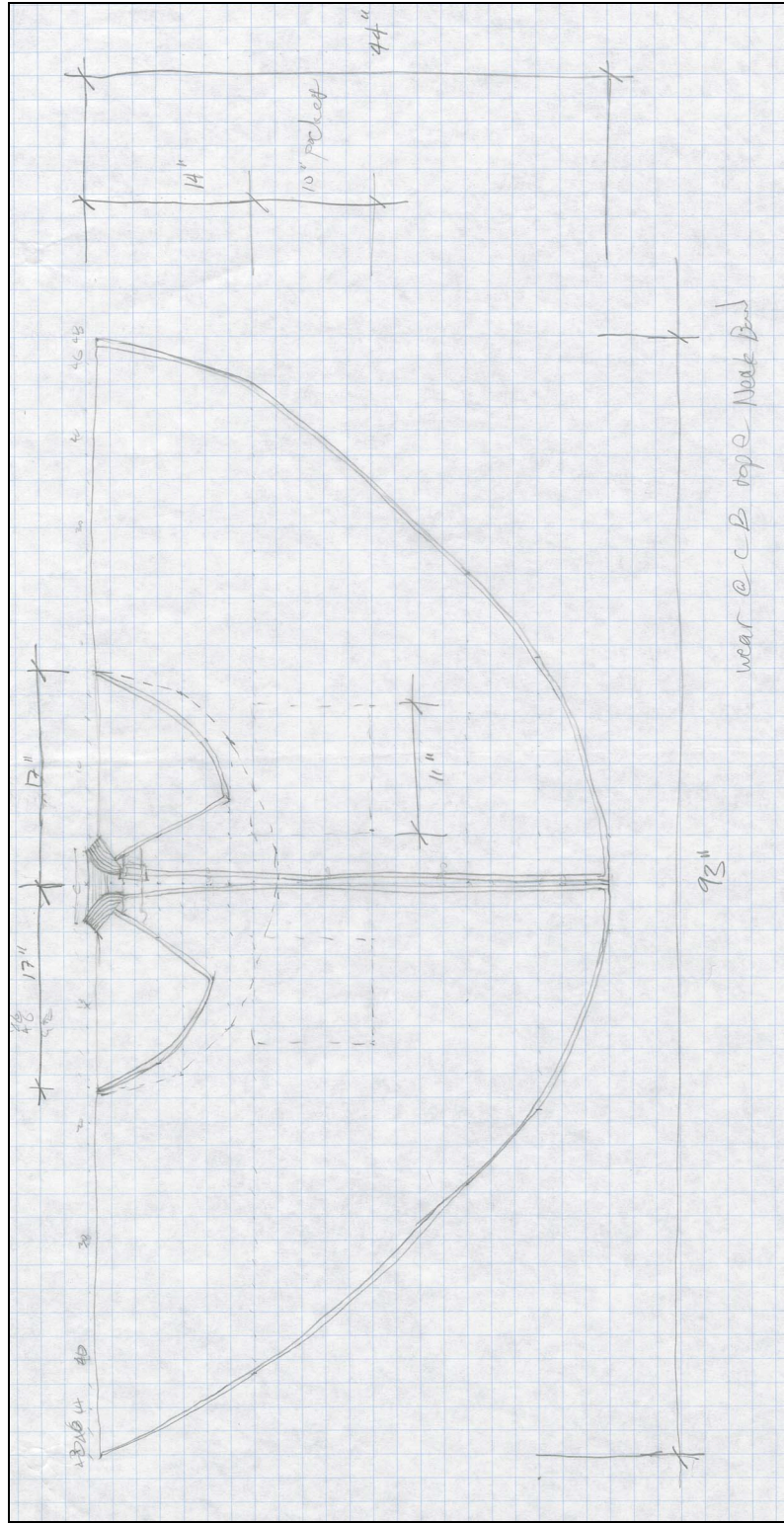
Sketch of the Half and Half coatdress, 1981.1.4



Sketch of the Tweed Poncho and Pants, 1981.1.9a-c



Sketch of the Big Flamenco Cape, 1981.1.13



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Blausen, Whitney, and Christine Miner Minderovic. "Bonnie Cashin." In *Contemporary Fashion*, edited by Taryn Benbow-Pfalzgraf, 108-9. Farmington Hills, MI: St. James Press, 2002.

"Bonnie Cashin." In *Current Biography Yearbook*, edited by Charles Moritz, 69-71. New York: The H. W. Wilson Co., 1970.

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Cashin, Bonnie. "The Elegant Solution." Written for *American Fabrics and Fashions*; Cashin file 2, clipping no. 9, Fashion Institute of Technology.

———. "Sounding Off: Nurturing American Designers." *Washington Star*, April 8, 1981; Cashin file, Brooklyn Museum of Art.

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———, "Press Preview Nov. 7th-Opening Nov. 8, 1961." Collection essay for the spring 1962 collection; Bonnie Cashin Collection of Fashion, Theater, and Film Costume

- Design (Collection Number 440). Department of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA.
- , "Press Preview May 23rd-Opening May 24th, 1962." Collection essay for the fall 1962 collection; Bonnie Cashin Collection of Fashion, Theater, and Film Costume Design (Collection Number 440). Department of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, UCLA.
- , "Fall-Winter 1964-65 Press showing May 14-Opening May 18." Collection essay for the fall 1964 collection; Cashin file, The Textiles and Clothing Museum, Iowa State University.
- , "Spring Opening November 3, 1966." Collection essay for the spring 1967 collection; Cashin file, Brooklyn Museum of Art.
- , "Opening Fall 1967-May 4, 1967." Collection essay for the fall 1967 collection; Cashin file, The Textiles and Clothing Museum, Iowa State University.
- , "Sills Spring 1971-Opening Nov. 12, 1970." Collection essay for the spring 1971 collection; Cashin file, The Textiles and Clothing Museum, Iowa State University.
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